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HAGAR REVELLY



By
DANIEL CARSON GOODMAN
Author of "Unclothed"



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To
MY MOTHER
who has ever been to me the friend . . .
steadfast, enduring, self-sacrificing.

63-46

The regulator of the world is destiny . . .

—Remy de Gourmont.

CHAPTER I

EMAN REVELLY and his wife had quarrelled for quite half of their twenty years together. This quarrel was apparently much like the others.

His wife and the two daughters, Hagar and Thatah, sat at the breakfast table, as he backed in from the kitchen. His short, thick figure was trembling with temper, the beads of perspiration, like little pearls, stood out upon the bald part of his head.

"Fanny is disrespectful again. For a servant, a blockhead, a piece of animal flesh without brains, to answer me in this manner is — is —" he stumbled on the word, and then, noticing the look of disgust and tolerance on his wife's face, and on the face of the younger daughter, Hagar, he controlled himself and took the remaining vacant chair.

As if he felt the necessity for further words, he asked nervously: "What have we to eat?" He took a handkerchief from his sleeve and energetically mopped his reddened face, adding, "I get so nervous. I can't control myself."

The only answer that came to him was a laugh from Hagar. The child was always amused when her father spoke under temper, for his habit of rolling the r's had never left him. But further aggravation from Hagar was suppressed by her face being buried in a napkin.

After a moment, Mrs. Revelly broke in. Not very courageously, she said: "Hagar, show your father some respect."

They went on with their meal. Eman Revelly sat stolidly in his chair, not eating, the while he nervously fingered the blue table cloth.

Suddenly his face reddened to a higher color, he put his fingers to his moustache, irrelevantly turning the ends, and at last with great emotion, when it seemed that everyone else was wrought up to his pitch of excitement, he spoke.

"Gott, I can't stand this, I tell you. What is it here? Am I a stranger in my own house?" He turned to Thatah, the older daughter. "You see," he went on; "they sit there, silently, as if I were a stranger."

"Father," begged Thatah.

Her beseeching tone only brought added argument. "No, Thatah, it is of no use. I have noticed them for a long time. I've only not said anything."

Turning upon his wife, who was with precision dipping her spoon into an egg cup, he shouted again:

"Am I a stranger in my own house?"

Mrs. Revelly remained silent, shrinking from his angry words by bowing her head a little more and drawing together her shoulders.

He flashed, even more angrily: "Tell me."

At last she looked up at him.

"Oh, Eman, are we to have another scene?" Then, turning to Hagar, she said quietly. "Hagar, dear, ring for some more coffee."

Her manner, nonchalant, disdainful, whimsical, though done by a forced effort, only aroused Revelly to greater fury. He asked why it was that after many requests, Fanny should disregardedly come tramping into the house long past midnight, disturbing him and unfitting him for rehearsal the next day.

"Listen," he said, as he pointed toward his wife, his anger most visible upon his queer, squinting face. "I

want you to have her in this house every night, at no later than ten-thirty."

Revelly turned to his food for the first time. In his manner was the apparent understanding that nothing more remained to be said. But Mrs. Revelly surprised him by replying: "Eman, Fanny will come in — when she pleases."

This indifference and reply gave the musician a new shock. He turned pale, his hands trembled, as his mind searched for an answer; while the listening Fanny, in emphasis of the secret understanding that existed between her mistress and herself, gave a laugh that resounded through the open door and flaunted its insolence into his face.

For a moment Revelly glared at his wife, then he broke out furiously. "It's a shame that a characterless woman like that servant should have a place in my house."

The vehemence in his manner and voice startled afresh the three grouped at the table; though he immediately quieted down and showed a sign of regret, more to Thatah than anyone else, by mumbling: "I spoke hastily. Let us eat." The noisy staccato that his knife played upon the saucer of his coffee cup, betrayed the temper that was surging through him.

For a time it seemed that a lull had come in the storm of this quarrel-ridden family. Thatah went on eating, her face remaining changeless, though seemingly expectant of the outburst which she knew by long experience would soon come from her mother's lips; while the fifteen-year-old Hagar, not quite understanding the strange words of her father, sat up, more interested, with her brown eyes wide open and her lips apart. She even feared her mother had been silenced.

But Rena Revelly soon answered him, and all the con-

summated feeling of rebellion, stifled from his first words, came angrily from her.

"Eman, you show how low and common you are. It proves to Hagar what I have long ago told her."

Arising from her chair, she went into the narrow hall that separated the bedroom from the dining room and kitchen.

The musician quickly followed her.

"You have hinted that before," he exclaimed, as he reached her side. "Now, tell me what you mean!"

She looked at him steadily, even fearlessly for an instant. Then she burst out: "You *are* a common man, Eman, and I hate you."

"Remember what you are saying," he interrupted, grasping her arm, as if to awaken her to more caution.

But now she continued defiantly: "Oh, I know what I'm saying. Yes, I know. The quarrels and bickering have gone on for too many years as it is. Eman, I'm tired of it. I'm tired of it whether you are or not. And you don't have to blame Fanny for it either."

"Rena, what are you saying?"

She continued, though more slowly now. "I mean what I say, Eman; it was I who came in at midnight, last night."

"You!"

"Yes."

His anger had changed into apprehension.

"What were you doing — out — Rena? For God's sake, what do you mean?"

At first Mrs. Revelly started to answer him directly. Then she choked off the words nearly formed. "Oh, I just got sick of the stuffy room. I went over to the park. That's all."

Revelly was too much astonished to comprehend. For a moment he could only regard her with an expression

full of bewilderment. After a time he said, as he studied her: "Rena, I can't understand you. Are you playing with me? What is the matter? Why do you deliberately allow me to get in this state, then, without giving me some word that would right it? Oh, I can't make you out."

There was a smile half defiant, half tender, on Mrs. Revelly's face as she answered him.

"Well, Eman, there isn't so much to make out. It's only that I'm sick of it, sick of everything — the common way we live — of you, the house, this neighborhood." She seemed roused again. "Yes, I am just so sick of it, I can't stand it. I can't look at you any more, either. Oh, I wish — I wish — you'd leave me, get a divorce, anything. I can't go on the way it is."

Revelly's hands dropped to his side. Often before, in the twenty years of their married life, she had puzzled him by her queer efforts at refinement and elegance amidst their squalor. Often indeed, she had shown him that she felt a distinct barrier of breeding separated them. By looks and gesture she had many times conveyed to him the understanding that she felt herself superior to him and her environment. Through all their years of strife and quarrels, he had noticed this in many ways, yet never before had she so directly worded this feeling.

The musician was indeed unnerved. His hands shook as he glared at her, his lips trembled as he tried to speak, while through his thoughts was running again and again, "*Mein unglück — mein unglück.*"

For a full minute they stood motionless. The tension was at last ended by the woman suddenly going into her bedroom and the husband returning to the breakfast table.

CHAPTER II

Mrs. REVELLY had not been in her room for very long before she became overwhelmed by the situation.

And then realizing for perhaps the first time, what might happen from her hasty words, she rushed back to Fanny in the kitchen and with imploring voice, which surprised the fat servant, begged her to go into the dining room and send Eman to her.

Like a child who awaited punishment, Mrs. Revelly stole back to the bedroom and waited.

In those few minutes she caught an impression, emphatic and strong, full of detail—her first few years with Eman, the prospect she had dreamed of, that had never come true—the total failure of her union with this weak-minded musician-husband.

As she sat rocking in the chair, she saw her own face again, very beautiful, as people had told her, when she was young. The time of Thatah's birth came before her. She was in bed—dreaming, full of confidence in the oncoming period of expectancy—langourously dreaming of blue skies and mysterious forests, ready for the gypsy-like passage with her lover along the mountain highway, soothed by the music of nicking goats and the muffled echo of waterfalls.

And she remembered how she had awakened soon after with amazement, to find that her lover husband, with whom she had shared the deep shaded ravines, was not the curly, black-haired Apollo, but a little German student, with hesitating manners and a bald head.

Eman was in the doorway now, with Thatah at his

back. From the look in his grey eyes she knew his anger had not abated.

"You have sent for me," he said, coldly.

She looked up at him, hardly aroused from the contemplation of her past: "Yes, Eman—I've sent for you."

He said steadily: "Well, what is it?"

"I—I wanted to talk over, Eman, what I—"

He interrupted her. "There is nothing to talk over. You've told me the truth. You don't care any more. You haven't for a long while."

For a full minute he paused. Then his words came mingled with anguish and self-pity.

"You think it is nothing. You don't see what a time I have had of it, struggling from morning to night with the orchestra and the pupils, my heart torn to pieces by such rotten drudgery."

His short stocky figure trembled, while Thatah, who had been standing by in the hallway, came into the room murmuring, "Oh, father, please, please—"

But he went on resolutely. "You've never realized that you might have combined with me. You have never given a thought to the fact that I was quenching all my ambitions just to support you. No, a woman like you never thinks of that. Have you ever prayed for *my* happiness? I ask you that, have you?" He gazed at her pityingly. "Oh, if you only understood," he cried.

Then his voice died down. "Always telling me what you are giving up, what you might have had. Yes, it isn't the slip you made that has decided me. It's your attitude; it has become more intense with each day that has passed since the time I was compelled to take pupils and give up concert work.

"Yes, as long as you had dreams and thought there was a possible chance of my becoming known and making

money, you stayed by me. But ever since that possibility has passed away, you've lost all interest in me or my work."

He walked over and sat in a chair by the window.

"Why, every time I've looked at you," he went on, "the feeling has gnawed at my heart that you gloried in the fact that things were not going well. I know. Other women in your position take a pleasure in sewing or mending. *They* want to be of some help; with you — it is always Fanny — Fanny this, Fanny that — isn't it true? Yesterday my socks weren't mates; but could I tell my wife? You don't take any pains about the house — always Fanny. The meals are terrible, always the same — warmed-over bread, tough dry meats. Yes, you don't care. That's it — you don't care . . . And I have always given in to you. First, it was too much music for you; then I must even give up Catholicism to please you.

"Oh, I've watched you. You decided that since I was unhappy it was of no use for you to be so, and you've gradually gone on with this reasoning until you actually have come to feel yourself a thing apart from our troubles. It's been all wrong from the beginning. You have no understanding of me. And it has made me suffer, I tell you, suffer deeply a long while ago."

As he went on there came the words that made her clutch at the arm of her chair for support.

"I'll get you a lawyer," he said. "We will live separately. Thatah will come with me and you will take Hagar."

Mrs. Revelly might have been able to persuade herself that what she needed was firmness, or she might have thought that a few soft words would repair the situation. But when she perceived his deep, throbbing anguish and heard him pass sentence on her, something

filled her throat and stopped her breathing and her eyes became moist with tears.

It was so plain how he hated her. She had suspected it for months, had noticed it in his treatment of Hagar, in his sullen greetings in the morning. But now it was a truth and not a suspicion. Every prop had been torn away from her. She was to be left alone, with Hagar!

Revelly arose from his chair and walked into the hall.

"Eman," she cried after him, "for Heaven's sake think of Hagar. She is not to blame."

With the thought that he could not be so cruel with her touch on his arm, she went nearer to him. And it was with some satisfaction that she saw him hesitate. The tension in his face seemed lessened, the cruelty seemed to have passed from his eyes and she thought she had really aroused his pity. Immediately all her strength was used to calm him. She began pleading, begging, beseeching him to consider more deeply the position into which she would be thrown should he take this final step.

"Why, it is even wrong for you to talk like this, Eman," she argued. "You must think of Hagar. I don't care what you do with me, but you still have an obligation to the child, Eman."

Not knowing how she exasperated him whenever she assumed this rôle of meekness, she looked up into his face, even more ardently imploring and submissive. Ignorantly she thought this would be the only manner of holding him.

But he listened to her words with gathering impatience. When she had finished, he said: "We have gone over the entire situation, Rena, and I cannot see that anything can be gained by talking about it. It wouldn't be long before everything would be just as bad again. No, it is best that we part."

Taking Thatah by the arm he pushed her ahead of him through the doorway.

Mrs. Revelly was overcome. She waited until she saw them turn at the head of the hall. Then she moved restlessly from the door to her dressing table, brushed some powder over her throat and cheeks, and again over to the window; walking back and forth with tears brimming over onto her haggard face and moans of despair escaping from her lips.

Suddenly Hagar burst in on her, crying:

"Oh, mother, he was cruel to you again, wasn't he?"

Mrs. Revelly silently took the girl in her arms and hugged her. Their faces were close together and the great tears that welled into both their eyes, mingled and ran down the mother's cheeks.

"Dear baby, you are another one of me," she whispered into the girl's ears. "I only pray that you will have an easier lot."

The child was perplexed.

"Why, what's the matter, mother?" she asked. "Isn't everything all right now?"

The mother turned away. "Oh, you poor kiddie," she moaned.

"But isn't everything all right now?" persisted the child. "Isn't it, mother? I thought he was only mean again."

Mrs. Revelly sank down on the edge of her bed, sighing: "Oh, you don't understand, Hagar."

"Oh, yes, I do, I listened to everything, and I am so sorry you are unhappy, mother dear."

Leaning over her, the girl threw her arms about her mother's neck and kissed her very delicately once or twice. Then, framing the woman's sad face with her little hands, she said:

"Isn't everything all right? You must tell me, mother."

"Please, dearie, don't —" begged the woman.

And Hagar, after regarding her mother for some time, exclaimed perplexedly: "Oh, you're so funny, mother. I don't understand you."

CHAPTER III

THE essential part of Mrs. Revelly's make-up was a desire to live true to her impulses, and in Hagar this quality was now acting in its first guise. It made of her a dreamer, a quaint child of nature, and gave to her no understanding except that which came through her emotions and impulses.

Having left school at the age of twelve, for no apparent reason other than that of disinclination on her part, and lack of control on the part of her mother, her little mind dealt only in simple material. She became a wandering, romantic, open-eyed little person, whose chief characteristic was an inordinate sense of affection for those whom she loved.

Hagar had many queer little ways. When the soft, low call of wintry winds came down from the north, she would stand by the window and gaze out, her mind wrapped in conjecture, her heart's spirit taking wing with the cold blast. Wandering with it, she would listen to its bluster and fury, and again to its quieting rhythm, as if she were the traveller instead of the tiny white flakes of snow outside the frosted panes — as if the storm and the wind were her express train to some unknown magical land.

When the summers came, and the sunlight was warm and the shadows mysterious, she would look out of the window, with her eyes staring, her mind yearning and dreaming, as the seductive warmth penetrated into every fibre of her body. At these times her mind would carry her off on the enticing breezes to some new land, a little

dream-isle, where everything was golden-colored and sweet-scented.

And now, though the quarrel between her parents rather bewildered her, still she took a keen interest in the dissolution of their household, all that day wandering about the house, watching and noting the changes that had taken place. She observed, with almost pleasurable curiosity, her mother's semi-hysteria and the sad, submissive expression on Thatah's countenance. Only gradually, the strange action of the family brought home to her the really serious aspect of what had happened. Early in the afternoon, when she met Thatah in the hallway and dropped into the broad seat of the hat rack, thinking her sister would stop for a word with her, Thatah passed on, never lifting her saddened eyes. And again, when she met her father, he seemed too preoccupied even to notice her.

All this began to bother her considerably, though strangely she felt no grief. It was more a feeling of interest that stirred her, and only the idea that she was neither taking part in the family tragedy, nor feeling it, seemed to trouble her.

It made her feel somewhat ashamed and guilty when she saw Thatah so sad. Once, she stopped in front of the mirror and tried to cry, in an effort to take her share of the unhappiness. It was of no use. Something new was happening and she could only feel queerly pleased.

But toward evening the gloom of the house and her loneliness commenced to take hold of her mood and she really became immeasurably sad.

When the dusk had already settled, she went into her own little room and closed the door. In this manner she thought she would shut out the silence, which had gradually become intolerable. Fanny called her at supper time, but she would not go. Sitting mutely by the win-

dow, she saw the stars come out, and then the dim moon.

Looking out into the darkness, Hagar began to think, for quite the first time, of the reason for all the trouble. She thought of her father and she wondered why it was that Thatah was unkind to her. She felt that she liked Thatah well enough. She thought she would have liked to say to Thatah: "Thatah, why is it we don't get along together? Why do you avoid me and look so funny when I talk to you?"

Until a big clock in the distance struck two, Hagar sat at the window childishly wondering what would be the outcome of the whole affair. Her mind seemed to be whirling about, and as she looked into darkness the trees and lamp-posts seemed to take on all sorts of grotesque shapes.

She became even a little frightened, but would not stop from brooding. There seemed so much that needed solution, so much to think about. And then, too, although she had twice lain down on her bed, as much to find a refuge from the gruesomeness of the night as for rest's sake, she could not sleep.

"I can't stand it," she exclaimed, suddenly pulling down the blind. There was already peeping up from the eastern sky a faint suggestion of dawn.

So, silent and stiff, Hagar rose and stole to Thatah's door.

Though she did not at all mean to do this, she found herself knocking lightly. Immediately she began to wish that Thatah had not heard, and her hand, as it lay on the door knob, was cold and trembling.

But Thatah's voice inquired: "Who is it?"

"It's me — Hagar," the child answered shakily.

"What do you want?"

"Let me in, Thatah, I want to see you."

How she wished she had not knocked! Surely, however, after all the quarrels, Thatah would not let her in.

But Thatah replied: "Wait a minute, Hagar; the door is locked."

Hagar heard the bare feet come across the floor and the sound of the turning key. Then—"Come in, Hagar."

She went in. Thatah was back in bed. By her side was a lamp turned quite high and an opened book lay on the little stand by her side.

"What's the matter?" asked Thatah.

Her light hair hung in profusion about her shoulders. Her face was pale. But she appeared very kind and somehow Hagar felt a desire to cry, and explain how lonesome she was and how scared she felt sitting by the window.

"Oh, sister, I don't know what's the matter. Why is everything so awful?"

"You think everything is awful, Hagar," replied Thatah, studying the soft face. "I didn't know you felt it so much."

"Oh, I don't know," answered Hagar vaguely. "But I do feel terribly unhappy. I never felt so nervous and funny before. Why does all this trouble have to come, Thatah?"

"Because our parents are unhappy together, I suppose."

Hagar gave an impetuous toss of her head that brought the heavy black hair around to her breasts.

"Oh, they oughtn't to do it now, anyway," she exclaimed. "It's father's fault. Why doesn't he be different? He's so queer and acts so funny." She looked at Thatah with wide open eyes. "You know that everybody says he's so wrapped up in his work that he neg-

lects mother. *Now*, what will they say? And then, I was to have gone to a dance to-night."

Thatah smiled. "Can't you go some other night, dearie?"

"Oh, it isn't that." Hagar rose and walked across the room.

After a moment she sat down again on the edge of the bed.

"You know that father has been mean to mother. I have seen him twice strike her. You know that, too. I guess father is crazy the way everybody says."

Thatah searched the round, white face, asking herself again and again if she should explain the situation to Hagar. Then she decided.

"Hagar," she began, "mother is a queer woman. I know this better than you; and she's selfish, too — and afraid of growing old. Father's different — he's worked hard. His ambition was to become a famous musician. Why, he might have," she looked up with her eyes wide awake, "if he hadn't been compelled to support us. You see, mother doesn't think of this. She never thinks he is really a great man. Mother only believes what other people say about him.

"Have you ever heard him play when he was alone?" she asked, more quietly. "I have, and that's the reason I know just how he feels. His music cries, Hagar, because when he plays it is the only time he expresses his real feelings. Oh, you don't know how wonderful he is!"

"Oh, Thatah!" the younger girl cried, astonished.

So, Thatah was unhappy, too — calm, superior Thatah. Hagar noticed how nervously her sister brushed back the hair that hung over her eyes, how her thin fingers clutched intermittently at the roll in the sheet. She was more struck at her sister's vehemence than by what her sister said.

For some time they sat in silence.

Then Hagar spoke. "Well, perhaps that's all true," she said restlessly. "But I know it's father's fault this time."

"It is mother's fault, Hagar," Thatah answered quickly. "She doesn't think, nor care."

"You mean that mother is the one that is causing all this trouble?"

"Yes, Hagar."

"Oh, I just can't understand you at all."

Thatah took hold of the child's dainty little hands and held them out in front of her, as if comparing them with her own.

At last she said softly: "I guess I must tell you, Hagar." She hesitated, then went on slowly. "Well, mother does not love him. She loves some one else."

"Why, Thatah!" gasped Hagar.

"Think, dearie," whispered Thatah.

Then Hagar started, as if given a new understanding. "Oh, you mean Mr. Nealy, don't you? Oh, no," she cried on, emphatically. "You are mistaken, Thatah. He is as fond of me as he is of mother. I know that."

"Dearie, you don't know everything," replied Thatah, grasping her sister's hands again.

"Well, I know enough."

Hagar was stretched alongside of Thatah now, with her hands under her head and her face to the ceiling, but when Thatah said that the mother was tired of their poverty and wanted to look pretty for Mr. Nealy, she sat upright, determined upon making an answer which would convince Thatah that she was in the wrong. She tried to arrange her thoughts so that she could strike on some incident, or occurrence, which could prove this. Then she thrust out:

"You don't like me, Thatah, that's it. You know you

don't. That's why you say these things about mother. It's because you know it hurts me when you speak of her that way. Well, it's not my fault that people think I am pretty, or take me out. If you'd take better care of your clothes and be more agreeable, they'd ask you too. You're jealous of me. That's the reason. Oh, mother has told me."

Thatah's ire was only slightly aroused by Hagar's outburst.

"Hagar, you don't know. And it's no use for us to quarrel. I am really happy when I see you happy. Then, I don't get fun out of the things you do. I guess that's the whole thing. Anyway, I couldn't go out and leave father alone all the time."

"But why doesn't he go with mother?" Hagar interrupted. "She would be lonesome, too, if she was as foolish as he is."

With a sudden determination to explain away the entire situation, Thatah sat upright in bed. For only an instant she faltered, wondering if she was doing right by exposing the secret which had so long rankled within her.

"I am going to tell you straight, Hagar," she began, her eyes blazing, her hands clenched tightly together. "Yes, I am going to tell you, tell you what everyone knows. Only they don't tell you, because you are too young. I guess I wouldn't tell you myself but that it is all over now. I've gone to mother and begged and begged her, but it's never been of any use. Sometimes, I wanted to tell father but I didn't dare.

"Well, I've watched them go out together, Hagar. Yes, mother and Mr. Nealy. I've seen her come in late at night with rouge on her lips and black plaster on her cheeks."

Thatah could not control herself. She went on, tell-

ing all the things of which Hagar had been so ignorant.

"You are pretty, Hagar, and everyone loves you. I know they don't care for me, because I am silent and don't go a lot with them. But I'm not jealous of you. All along I've only wanted somebody to tell things to. Don't you think I've suffered when I didn't have anyone to confide in? Why, I've worried about myself, too, and have wondered a lot of times, why it was that I was so different. I suppose it is because I am the only one who knows about the real cause of this trouble. And yet, even at that, I always blame myself for being the way I am. Yes, I blame myself and never have anyone to tell me that I'm wrong."

She continued earnestly:

"Look at my hands. Look how thin they are. I'm not yet twenty and yet I look lots older, and people think I'm queer like father." She appeared to be talking more to herself. "And all the time I've been wanting and begging for some one to whom I could tell the real cause of my being that way. Yes, mother knows why I am so unhappy, but she only thinks of herself."

As Thatah went on she forgot Hagar's presence entirely and that of her mother in the next room. Talking spontaneously, she let out the words that had been stored and accumulated.

"I couldn't tell father. So it has become as if I was choking down a secret that some day would be bigger than I could hold. Sometimes I wanted him to know it. But I would see him coming home at night tired and worried. So I would go on to the next time, choking it down."

"You don't mean that mother is a bad woman, do you, Thatah?" Hagar asked.

"Yes, sister," came the reluctant answer.

Hagar rose quickly now from where she had seated herself.

"Oh, I've had enough of this," she burst out angrily. "You're lying — you're lying — and I won't talk to you."

Hagar ran from the room, and on reaching her own bed, buried her head deep in the pillows. Her heart ached bitterly. Thatah was abusing her mother. How Thatah had talked. What lies she had told about her mother and about her. She would never believe them. Mr. Nealy was an old friend. He only took her mother out walking and saw her so often because he felt sorry for her, sorry for the way her father neglected her. Then, hadn't she heard her father say often enough that he had no time "to waste" on going out?

Hagar thought on deeply, asking herself again and again if there could be some chance that Thatah was right. Over the entire ground she fought her way, battling against the accusation, point by point, endeavoring to convince herself of its absolute untruth.

And then, gradually, in one way or another, she became bewildered, one minute being absolutely sure of her convictions and the next confronted by some shadow of doubt, which would not let her rest.

At last, she saw that she must confront her mother for a solution, telling herself that it was only because the mother would show how wrong Thatah was.

She was hardly past the door when she became greatly frightened. Her mother was lying, face buried in the pillows, struggling to overcome the emotions that had attacked her mind and body throughout the night. Her hands were gathered about her face, her sobs despairing and mournful.

Hagar ran and knelt at the side of the bed, her heart

so torn by her mother's pitiful condition that she hardly dared to speak.

In that moment she forgot all her sister's imputations, all the merciless words that had been poured into her ears, and her own argument that had nearly convinced her of their truth. Remembering nothing, neither reasoning nor asking for explanation, she threw her arms about the quaking body, crying, as she kissed the white hands and forehead, "Mother, mother, I love you, I love you. I don't believe anything Thatah told me."

But her mother lay motionless, and except for the deeply suppressed sobs that escaped from her now and again, she gave no apparent recognition of Hagar's presence, while Hagar, frightened, kept on pleading, "Mother, she's lying and I know it. Oh, please don't be so sad. Talk to me — please."

Finally Mrs. Revelly uncovered her face and Hagar saw the colorless cheeks and the blood-shot eyes that were dry and sunken. It moved her to kiss the woman again, and repeat: "You know, mother, I don't believe it."

Mrs. Revelly raised herself in the bed and tried to speak. It was a useless endeavor, at first, and only after a time, after she had seemed to call into play every muscle of her body, was she able to say: "Hagar, what your sister told you — is true. Oh, I heard it all."

She stared vacantly at the ceiling as she spoke, lifting her hands to her throat in an effort to ease the feeling that was choking her.

"Yes, Thatah hasn't lied," she moaned, talking through her dishevelled hair. "Oh, God knows I am suffering enough for it." With the words came another tumult of sobs and tears.

Fearing some dreadful end to her mother's suffering, Hagar crawled upon the bed and wrapped her arms about

her mother's quivering body. And from an instinctive fear that loud words might make worse her mother's condition, she talked softly, in a hushed voice.

"Don't, please, mother, please don't cry," she murmured again and again. Her own throat was beginning to twitch spasmodically.

But her mother was not to be quieted, and kept up a continuous, running, self-abasement. "I wronged him, Hagar, I wronged him, and now I am suffering for it."

"You must be quiet, mother," implored Hagar. "I love you and I always will. I shall never leave you but will stay and comfort you. I know how mean father has been. Now, please don't worry so."

They lay together, their arms entwined, cheek against cheek, and the mother whispered: "Oh, my little girl, how little you know of the world." With a trembling hand she stroked back the soft black hair of the child. "Yes, if you knew, you would not forgive me so easily."

Then she drew Hagar closer. "Listen, child, my beloved, I do not care for your father. I have tried very hard, but I can't. A kind word, even a glance from him cuts me like a knife. Oh, I tried so hard before I gave in to the truth of it. And I can't, I can't. With Mr. Nealy, there is peace and happiness, Hagar, but with your father . . . Oh, my little girl, you will never forgive."

"Why, I forgive you now, mother," cried Hagar, eager for her mother to continue.

And, as if doubting her, the mother said again, "You wouldn't if you understood."

"I do, I understand," Hagar answered. "And I do forgive you. Why I'd just die if I didn't have you. We'll live together and be quiet and happy. You'll be happy because he won't bother you. You'll see. Now don't be so miserable."

Her simple pleading affected the mother deeply. She clasped Hagar in a tight, nearly painful embrace, while Hagar, more encouraged, went on:

"You think I don't understand — why, mother, sometimes when I get to thinking, I dream such wonderful dreams, too, about living in big houses, and having carriages and a lot of money and people looking at me. Sometimes I dream I am very beautiful and very happy because I can have just everything I want. You see, I know how it is. All I have to do is look around and see how awful everything is here and how poor we are."

Mrs. Revelly truly conceived the earnestness of Hagar's confession. Though the child's words were a misinterpretation of her own mood, she felt it better to let Hagar believe in her dreams. It would do no good to tell her that this misery was something different, something caused by the sorrow of guilt. And then, far back in some remote niche of her brain, was there not this same childish thought, lain dormant since youth?

"Hagar, I am going to tell you something," she whispered into the child's ears. "Many women go through this torture that I have suffered. They get tired of a dull life and poverty, but never give in. That is, they never dare, and think they are still good women because they haven't given in — until some day when they get to wishing and yearning so much they just can't fight back.

"Then comes the blow, Hagar. Some cruel, mean thing, makes them look in the looking-glass, maybe while they are dressing that night — to meet *him*. And they see awful wrinkles and long grey hairs.

"Well, it's all over that minute. They see it's no use, that they have grown old. It makes them feel very ashamed of themselves and very foolish, Hagar, whenever they think about it, after that. And they stay unhappy for a long time. When they get over it, they don't care

any more, unless — they have got some one else.” Mrs. Revelly kissed Hagar with deep affection, before she went on. “That is the only thing will save them,” she added in a whisper.

More slowly she continued:

“Dear child, I met Mr. Nealy eight years ago, when I had no one to care for or that cared for me. Everything was so monotonous that I couldn’t hold out. I’ve loved him ever since I met him. I love him desperately. And it is only because I love him so much that I cling to him — just for that reason alone. For he is as poor as we are, and cannot give me anything.

“At first, he came to me and needed a friend as much as I did. He was trying hard to make a living and I was only interested in his ambition. But I began to know and understand him. . . . I would do anything in the world he’d ask of me, Hagar. Except for you, he is the only one I have to live for.”

By now Mrs. Revelly was calm and lay along Hagar’s side, her eyes gazing almost peacefully at the ceiling paper.

“Yes, kiddie, I tell you because I want you to know,” she went on. “He is so kind, and good and tender. He has given up his life for me. I never knew what it was to throb just when some one touched me. I never knew how it felt to have your heart jump just at the sight of a person. But I know now, and before God, who is my witness, I wouldn’t give him up for anything else in life.”

She added, in a soliloquy, while Hagar lay in her arms half asleep, “We pay dearly for all the sweetness that comes to us, and I am willing to pay for mine.”

Her eyes were filled with tenderness as she spoke.

Suddenly she turned on her side toward Hagar, and putting her arms about the child’s body convulsively

drew her near. "Oh, Hagar," she cried; "tell me I'm not a bad woman, tell me, kiddie, tell me. Say I am only a good woman, who must suffer now because she has endured her unhappiness too long."

Her voice was full of begging. The child was wide awake again. "Tell me more, mother," begged Hagar.

"There is not much more to tell, dearie. I only wanted you to know." Then she hesitated. "I wonder," she said more slowly, "now that you do know it, if you can be just as fond of me, if we can be just as dear to each other. Oh, Hagar, you see I am burying the mother in me deep enough when I tell you these things. But you must know after all. Problems will come into your life when you grow older, when you are totally unprepared. Perhaps, I am only doing a mother's duty after all."

"You've suffered, haven't you, mother?" said Hagar, holding her mother more tightly.

For the first time Mrs. Revelly smiled a little. "Oh, I suffered at the beginning, dearie. I feared your father would notice and I feared his violent threats even more.

"Why should I give him up, if he is so dear to me?" she thought on. "We could go away some place to live, Hagar, in a little apartment in some other part of town, unless your father leaves here himself, as he says. But it is the end. Thatah will stay with him. And you?" She drew Hagar near to her. "Will you stay with me?"

"Wherever you go, mother," Hagar breathed softly.

Mrs. Revelly clasped Hagar in her arms with renewed affection and with her lips at the child's lips, whispered:

"Oh, Hagar, you *are* a part of me. You must stay by me." And to reassure herself she asked again, "You will, won't you?"

"Always, mother, always," Hagar murmured. . . .

It was nine o'clock that morning when they had quieted themselves.

In the next room could be heard Thatah and her father talking in low tones and then a number of steps in the hallway, mingled with the grating noise of a trunk dragged along the bare boards of the floor.

Hagar lay asleep, while Mrs. Revelly fell into a new paroxysm of tears, as she realized that her husband had actually begun his preparations for leaving her.

CHAPTER IV

THAT she managed to pull through the following week without losing all hold on herself was a real surprise to Mrs. Revelly. In reality the one thing that kept her from giving in entirely to her feelings was the unceasing effort she made to persuade herself this great calamity was not of her own making.

After the first few days she gained strength rapidly. Perhaps it was chiefly on account of her material worries, for during the week following Eman's departure she was forced to become more practical than she had ever been before.

Deciding that she could not keep the flat without more money than would be coming from her husband, she inserted a small advertisement in the paper. The wording of it, which mentioned a delightful room in a refined family consisting of mother and daughter, brought many applicants. Fanny also decided to stay temporarily for a few dollars less a month, which made it possible for Mrs. Revelly to offer meals as well as rooms.

By the fourth morning the two vacant rooms had been taken. The one next Mrs. Revelly's was rented to a thin-faced little woman, who wore rubbers the day she came, because of a slight fog in the early morning. Her name was Janet French and she introduced herself by saying that she attended to her own business, never bothered about anyone else's affairs and that in place of the parlor she would expect to use her bedroom for her company. Mrs. Revelly gave her the room.

Noontime of the same day came another, a young man.

Mrs. Revelly sent Hagar down to see him.

She found him standing in the vestibule carefully studying one of the old weathered oil paintings.

"You want to see about a room?" asked Hagar.

"Yes, if you please." He held in his hand the advertisement clipping. "My name is Herrick—F. A. Herrick. I am employed by the Raphael Art Glass people, as designer," he added. "What do you want for a room and board?"

He spoke in a very businesslike manner and had a direct way of expressing himself.

Hagar hesitated. "If you will wait, I'll ask," she said, and left him standing in the middle of the hall.

The fellow was clean cut and rather attractive physically. His face was boyish—he couldn't have been past twenty-two—and as he saw Hagar's trim little figure pass up the stairway, his blue eyes followed anxiously. "I hope it isn't too much," he said to himself as he watched her.

Into the room upstairs Hagar darted unceremoniously.

"Oh, mother," she cried; "he's the dandiest looking fellow, and he wants to know how much we want."

Mrs. Revelly, even yet too weak and ill to deal in business matters, searched her brain for a price. The room that was vacant was a much larger room than the one rented to Miss French.

After some thought she said:

"Ask him what he paid at his last place."

Miss French was paying eight dollars for her room and board. She thought that for the other room it ought to be at least ten. But she let Hagar rush down to the young man.

"Mother says you can have it for the same as you paid

in your last place," said Hagar, before she was fairly in the hall.

"Well," he replied, "I left the last place because it was a little too steep for me, but I am willing to pay nine dollars a week if that is agreeable."

Hagar answered immediately. "Mother says that will be all right. I will show you the room."

She took him to the room and after he had given it the slightest kind of cursory glance, he told her that he would be glad to send his trunk over the same evening.

"Whenever you wish," said Hagar.

They shook hands at the door, and the warmth of his strong grasp stayed with Hagar until her eyes followed him around the corner of the next street.

There were four more callers that day, three young men, and one rather old, who wore a heavy golden horse-shoe in his tie and had big red hands. But all were dismissed, as Mrs. Revelly decided despite Hagar's protests that the child should still have her own room to herself.

It was after this first week that Mrs. Revelly thought it would not be wrong for Mr. Nealy to come to her, and, after holding off for another day from answering his yearning letters, she wrote to him. When Nealy came, Mrs. Revelly felt that all evidences of her tearful days of stress and worry were removed. She had spent an hour getting ready for this first meeting since her husband's departure, and he found her quietly reading and looking very well.

Arising from her chair, she ran to the door, taking a passing glance in the mirror.

Nealy was paler than when she had last seen him. Deep lines ran down from his eyes to the corners of his mouth.

For a moment they regarded each other without even touching hands. Nealy plainly showed how anxious he

was, when he kissed her. Her arms were still about his neck as they stood and talked.

"I'm glad it's all over." His voice was calm for quite the first time. "Now, tell me what's happened."

"Well — he's left."

"Left!"

"Yes, and taken Thatah with him."

His state of bewilderment was apparent. He grasped her hands roughly.

"But what is going to happen? Am I mentioned —"

"Why, John —"

"Oh, I know," he said hastily. "But look what it means to me if I get mixed up in a divorce case. I guess it's ruin," he added intensely.

Mrs. Revelly laughed. "John, you're acting foolish. Everything is all right."

Nealy, still excited, took her hand. "You mean he doesn't know?"

"Sure, John, and I don't think he ever will. Somehow the quarrel didn't seem to have anything to do with you — so far as he could see."

"But Thatah — doesn't she know? Won't she tell him?"

"I don't think so. She is too much afraid of giving him a new worry — you know how crazy she is about him. She could never tell him anything that would bother him."

Nealy's face lost some of its expression of excitement and fear. "I was pretty much worried," he confessed. "I didn't hear the whole truth. Your only letter was so vague. Things are bad enough for me as they are, and I guess you've had a bad time of it too, Rena."

Then he held her off from him, gently observing her for a moment, and patting her pale cheeks and smoothing back with a touch of his fingers, a wrinkle that had

gathered on her forehead. "But you are as beautiful as ever, Rena," he said.

She let him admire her, contented and happy to know that she was so attractive to him. When they were seated, on a divan near the window, he asked, hesitating to mention the subject: "Where have they moved to?"

"I think some place below Thirty-fourth Street on Lexington Avenue. He left the address with Hagar."

"After all, there will be peace and quiet now," he said, as he took her hand and kissed the back of it. "Peace and quiet, and I guess you deserve it, dear little woman."

"It has been very hard, though," she remarked.

"Yes, but it is over, and you are going to be very, very happy."

"I have thanked Heaven many times that I have you, John," she said seriously, looking up.

She fingered the small locket that he wore on a gold chain.

"You've — looked at that — this week?"

"You know that," he answered.

"You can't imagine how queer Hagar is becoming," Mrs. Revelly went on irrelevantly. She told how she had lately noticed the strange way in which the child would hug and kiss her, and how her little fingers would hold on after a caress.

"You can't realize the affection there is in that child," she added.

"I believe you're right," he returned, remembering how one day he had watched Hagar caress a young sparrow that had fallen from a tree, with an affection that was nearly abnormal. Though she held the little thing gently between her fingers and stroked the feathery back with great delicacy, yet he perceived how her hand trem-

bled, and her body stiffened, and the quivering of her lips and slow rhythmic moving of her little bosom.

It had been all suppressed in the child, but he could see the emotions that ran through her. And now he told the woman beside him about it.

"There is everything in her that there is in you, Rena," said he; "passion, emotional regard, affection — only they don't come out because they have never been brought out. But that is only because she is not yet conscious of herself." Before he thought of his words, he went on: "And she is the kind of woman that would give her future, everything, in the instant. That is what you notice in her embrace. It is passion."

"You mean like me, dear?" Mrs. Revelly questioned.

"A good deal, only you, poor child, were made by circumstance to go for so long without what was rightfully yours."

Mrs. Revelly became lost in thought. At last she said: "I am afraid you are right about Hagar."

"I am anxious to see her," he said.

He left very late that evening, but his curiosity about Hagar kept Mrs. Revelly wondering considerably. In his next visit, his first question was again about the child. And when he found she was out, Mrs. Revelly could see a shadow of disappointment spread over his face.

They saw each other every day now, and the hours passed always too quickly. It was as if they were again living through a rejuvenation of their earlier love.

One day they discussed a new book that had met with a great deal of success. The title of the book was "A Song of Life," and Nealy brought up the subject since it was spoken of as a new departure in literature.

"The woman in it has a little short nose, just like yours," said he playfully.

While they were discussing the book, they came across

a full paged picture on one of the leaves, which showed a woman stretched out at full length upon a window seat. It made him look at the figure of Mrs. Revelly and then he allowed his glance to follow down the length of her limbs to her feet, where just a glimpse of flesh could be seen through the sheer fabric of her thin stockings.

He seated himself beside her, and took her in his arms and ran one hand up and down her side, in a passionate caress.

"It's curious, Rena," he said, quietly, "how we have gone on for eight years, feeling and caring in just the same way we did when we first met."

"It is all very strange," she murmured.

"It sometimes makes me wonder."

"About what?"

"Oh, what it all means. We get so happy and so sad, and we yearn so much and get so little, and then in the end — always happy just to be able to go on without realizing a thing."

"Yes, I think of that a lot."

"Of course I am happier now," he went on, "but my days are a little strange, for all that. I talk so earnestly to people, and look into their eyes, and listen to what they say, and all the time in my inner consciousness knowing that it is only to enable me to make a few dollars — just to live a little longer."

When the time came for him to go he murmured that it was all too soon. And at the door, she held up her face to him and he placed a kiss on her lips, and said:

"It is going to be different, now, Rena, isn't it?"

She put her arm about him. "Yes, dear friend." Then she added, "I want *you* to be happy now."

"I am, you know that."

Before he passed onto the broken stone steps he took

her in his arms again, saying in a hushed voice: "Rena, I do love you."

His feelings appeared to have surged up and encompassed him at that last moment. It was very reluctantly that he shut the door after him.

When he had gone Rena went back to her room. It was dark, but she hesitated to make a light. Instead she began thinking, recalling the first time they met, the beginning of their acquaintance. Her thoughts went back over the years. She remembered the little glances at first and the short strange meetings, and talks.

She remembered the beginning of their acquaintance. It had commenced when he was on the verge of being known as a writer of serious fiction and more because it was fiction without the usual detail for romantic action. Then came three years' separation while he was away amongst some wood choppers and lumber camps in the north. When he returned with the work he had written, they met one day at the studio of a fellow musician of her husband. That day they mentioned to each other another engagement that would bring them together. In a week they were meeting regularly with a feeling of exultation and gladness pervading their beings.

A book was illly received, then another with no more success. He was compelled to seek employment after that, as an assistant in the office of a business magazine. And as he became poorer, her interest in him had increased. A year later there was such absolute need of him that all consequences were disregarded.

How she had tried to interest him. She remembered distinctly the way she had managed her hair, how she had watched the blending of colors so that her complexion would show to better advantage.

One day he stayed later than usual and her husband met him, and liked him, which eased her considerably and

made her feel that now it was not at all wrong that he should stop in for the cup of tea.

Their intimacy grew. She had so long suffered from inattention and disregard that she had actually grown to believe there was in her no longer any ability of being attractive or attracting admiration. But he listened to her words in a way that seemed to enhance every remark that she uttered. Their clasped hands at parting each time seemed to convey to each other the full meaning of their deep regard.

Once she noticed that he was looking less pale, that there was more color in his cheeks and glitter in his eyes. Gradually she became aware that she excited him. How pleased she had been when she noticed that. It was something so new to feel she could do this, that she went on trying, studying his moods and wishes. And then — she could not explain how it happened — but very gradually it seemed, she began to feel in herself the strange quickening of her pulse and the joyous beating of her heart that she had so delighted in seeing evidences of in him.

Soon after came the day he told her he loved her and was unable to help it. His words had indeed been sweet. "I have held out too long," he said.

But she saw he recognized the situation, too, and she had to witness the struggle going on within the man, until at last it made her so unhappy she could only turn her face away and beg him not to suffer so intensely.

When she realized that afternoon that his lips were upon her forehead and cheek for the first time, she felt like crying out in the joy and pain of it. Even wanting to struggle against him, she knew it was beyond her power to offer resistance.

Then had come in quick succession the realization of her indiscretion, his efforts for weeks to stay away from

her, a begging note that she had sent late at night, telling that she must have him in her life. . . .

The years had passed, and as Mrs. Revelly viewed now the many days of happiness since then, she felt that the intensity of their regard for each other was a noble thing, and had only been nourished by passing time because of its righteousness.

CHAPTER V

HAGAR had been visiting a girl friend for a few weeks, and when John Nealy, on one of his visits, found her back at the side of her mother, he was very much pleased.

After their first greeting, he kept his eyes on her, saying: "Well, Hagar, it's been some time since I've seen you; how are you?"

Hagar shook his hand warmly. "Very well, Mr. Nealy," she answered. Her eyes smiled and sparkled and the slight color in her cheeks was made more prominent by the very black hair which hung in straight bangs over her forehead.

Nealy regarded appreciatively her pretty face and superb little figure. "My, but you are getting to be a young lady," he exclaimed, with his eyes alive. "I wouldn't think that a few weeks could make such a difference."

"Why, Hagar is still a baby," intruded Mrs. Revelly, who had been watching almost enviously.

He answered that Hagar would be a young woman before she knew it. As he talked, Mrs. Revelly noticed that his eyes never ceased their admiring look into the girl's face.

"You shouldn't say that, John," she commented; "if only because it makes me feel old."

It pained her somewhat to think that instead of giving her his time, he should be wasting it on the bashful Hagar.

Nealy, becoming vaguely conscious of her injured feelings, replied: "You will always be young to me, Rena."

They decided to walk over to Riverside Drive, where

life was more splendid than between the rows of shabby apartment houses.

"We will watch the aristocracy, and envy them," he said whimsically, looking down, as he spoke, at his shabby black suit.

They crossed over to Seventh Avenue and then walked along One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street until they reached the driveway.

Here, running along the edge of the walk, was an unending line of green benches, crowded with women and children, while a few idle men were sprawling on the nearby grass. In the distance Grant's Tomb, with its dome, pointed into the still air, in silhouette against the mingling dust and smoke that hung above the city.

Nealy walked silently along between the two women, rather proud of his lovely companions. As they neared a turn in the road, a young man sitting on a bench, fast asleep, attracted their attention. He was shabbily dressed and an ugly scar ran down from the corner of his mouth to his throat, arraying the flesh into a series of whitened ridges, like the ribs in a fan.

As they passed, Hagar looked at him and exclaimed: "Oh, look, how awful!" and became suddenly downcast.

After they had walked on, Mrs. Revelly noticed the abrupt change in Hagar's mood and asked her what was the trouble.

"That man, mother," Hagar answered. "Did you see how awful he looked? Couldn't we give him some money?"

Amidst the mother's protestations, John Nealy took out a small piece of change and handed it to Hagar. With the money held aloft the girl skipped off, crying to them as she ran: "I'll be back in a minute."

While they stood waiting for her Mrs. Revelly said: "I wonder sometimes if I understand Hagar. She will

stay quiet for hours dreaming and thinking. If she reads a book she imagines herself the heroine of every adventure. Yet when she gets out into the open air like this, she is just as wild as a boy."

Hagar came rushing back to them.

"You should have seen how happy and surprised he was," she cried breathlessly. "He just looked at me and was nearly too surprised to take the money."

Hagar's mood had indeed changed. The momentary overcasting of her spirits had passed and she was again buoyant and childish. At Nealy's suggestion, she told as they walked on, about a book she had just finished reading, and how it had affected her.

He made her describe in her girlish way the hero and heroine of the story.

"Do you think you will ever have anything like that happen to you, Hagar?" he asked when she had finished.

They were walking along quietly.

"I don't know," she answered. In her voice was anticipation and eagerness.

As he questioned her, Nealy's attention was called to something more than her pretty naïve manner. At that moment he discovered in the glow of her cheeks and in her wondering speech an entirely new interest.

Reaching the end of the driveway they sat down, with their faces to the Hudson. Up and down the river moved the different craft, while in the distance, where the water seemed to meet the sky, could be seen a thin line of smoke coiling its way into the air. Then the white outline of an Albany boat came into view, while at the same moment they noticed across from them a big electric sign that loomed up in vast letters, in an incongruous comparison to the natural beauty of the reddish cliffs that framed the water.

Nealy found a host of forgotten memories steal back

to him as he viewed the scenery; thoughts of his own youth, his earlier ambitions and failures, all the different plans, the petty desires that had grown bigger with the man. Events which he thought he had quite forgotten all came back now and spun their little web of remembrance, and taunted him as they had done in the other years — it seemed as if they had been let loose from some sealed casket in his memory.

As he thought on, he wondered if it was chance or the pretty youthfulness of Hagar that brought back to him these forgotten things. He asked himself the question quite frankly, because he remembered that he had been always susceptible to a pretty face.

As they sat quietly viewing the scenery, Nealy felt himself becoming really saddened.

"Let us walk back," he said. Then, with the thought that the women might be too tired, he suggested they take one of the passing omnibuses.

They reached the door of the flat while it was yet sunny and hot. Mrs. Revelly asked him to come in, and they were hardly seated in the little parlor, when she surprised him by asking why his mood had changed so perceptibly in the last few minutes.

"You are acting sad, John, and you ought to be happy now," she told him.

"Why, Rena, I am happy," he answered. However, he felt that her question was not groundless. Deep in him, there was something disturbing and troubling, though when Hagar came back into the room the feeling seemed to pass off.

After that day Nealy came much more often to their home, and Mrs. Revelly was made happy again. Sometimes he stopped in of a morning on his way to the office, and again he would very unceremoniously drop in for a few minutes' chat at lunch time.

At first Rena Revelly was much pleased that, for some reason, he should feel more the need of her. It gave her a lot of pleasure and made the days pass quickly. But one evening, just after he had left them, she stopped to ask herself if there were not some new impulse that had again aroused him.

She thought about the problem a good deal that night, and gradually became assured that it was something other than her caresses that was giving him this new and increased pleasure. It even came into her mind that he was taking more care of his clothes these days and of his face, for now he never appeared unless he was cleanly shaven.

About a week later they were seated in the unlighted parlor, waiting for dinner. Hagar had gone to her room to change her dress, and she and Nealy were resting in silence. In a few minutes Hagar came back to have her mother fasten the back of her collar, which she could not manage. The child had on a pale blue waist of thin material and a tight fitting dark skirt which showed all the gentle curves of her form.

Mrs. Revelly drew the girl to her and gave her lips an affectionate kiss. "You're pretty as a picture to-night," she exclaimed. Then she quite unconsciously happened to look across to the man and noticed the new expression on his face and the new life in his eyes. That casual glance, changed to real belief her previous fears and anxiety, heightened the colors in the ratiocinative picture so gradually confronting her.

During the evening she tried hard not to betray her new understanding. But, when once Nealy remarked on Hagar's beauty, she exclaimed in tones nearly beyond her control: "I am getting old, John. I believe you are falling in love with my daughter."

"Don't be silly, Rena," he replied; while she fought

valiantly not to show she had seen the almost guilty look that had stolen across his face.

The next afternoon Hagar was out when he called and he did not stay for dinner, making the excuse that he was not well.

Mrs. Revelly was in truth grieved; for planning on this evening alone with him, she had with special care dressed herself and ordered the meal.

Depressed and lonely, she went to the table almost hating her two boarders, though after a while, she found herself listening to their talk with a certain vague enjoyment.

Herrick was really a very talkative and cheering person. When he joined Mrs. Revelly, and Hagar, who had by now come home, on the porch after dinner, he grew even more encouraged and talked rampantly, explaining that he would eventually become an artist, even though now they compelled him to do clerical work, on account of the dulness of the season. "But I'll make them come around to my work before I am through," said he courageously, as he found Hagar listening attentively to his words.

To the mind of the youthful Hagar, Herrick was an ideal type of physical beauty, with his broad shoulders and tall stature, and as they sat on the steps, facing each other, she felt like letting him understand that she admired him.

There was always something, however, that kept her from looking directly at him or indulging in any conversation. She could not explain this feeling, and only once since he had come to their house had she been able to answer directly his searching glances.

That night after her mother had gone inside, and they were alone, Herrick surprised her by saying, as if the idea had just come to him: "You people are not very well off, are you?"

Hagar was startled.

"I do not know what you mean."

"Oh, I mean that you haven't got much money, backing, you know."

It was after some hesitation that Hagar replied, very bravely: "No, I guess we haven't."

"Well, that's what I thought." He seemed to be driving at some point in his mind that could not well be worded.

After a spell of silence in which Hagar wondered a great deal about what he was thinking, he went on:

"I was just wondering what *you* thought about it. It seems a pretty big thing to me, this being poor. And I guess a girl is in a worse position because it is harder for her to get out and look around." He hesitated. "Of course, it is too hot to do anything now, but I suppose you are going to do something in the fall, aren't you?"

"Why, why — I haven't thought of that," answered Hagar. Then she looked into his face. "I don't know what I'll do. Maybe I'll stay here and help mother, or maybe go back to school." As an after thought she added: "I hate school, though."

"Did you finish high school?" he asked.

"No, I was in the grammar still. I was sick all one year," she went on, meaning to explain to him the cause for her backwardness, "and when they wanted to put me back a year on top of that, why, I just quit. I hated to go to school and study all the time, anyway."

Herrick listened intently to her words and when she had finished he told her again that the question of work was a big proposition.

"Why, in my case, I went to work when I quit school. I saw the way things were going around the house, and I made up my mind to get right out for myself. Father

was a first-class job painter, and had his own business, but he was sick all the time and mother worried so because no money was coming in. Then the house got mortgaged and I took a job right off. I wanted to study oil painting as I could draw pretty well, but of course that was all knocked in the head. I had to get out and hustle."

"Isn't that fine? But of course it's different with girls," remarked Hagar.

"Oh, I don't know," he went on. "Maybe I think different about those things. I look at the girls, society girls, you know, who hang around sleeping all morning, because they get in about three or four o'clock from some dance, and then when they get up don't do anything but fix their hair and clothes and read novels all afternoon, waiting for their date that night with some new fellow. I think of them and wonder if they ever realize that they are no better than a lot of other women who hang around men. You know what I mean? Well, the women that make a living that way, dressing and fussing up for the men.

"Oh, there isn't so much difference," he exclaimed, mistaking her astonishment at his words for some smothered argument of defence. "There isn't so much difference, I can tell you. All the society girls do is to go out and watch for a husband. That's what it amounts to. And if some of them are really pretty and all the men chase after them, then they feel pretty safe about the husband proposition, and don't care if they are a little sportier than the other girls. They think they can do that, because they know it won't queer them like it would the ugly girls. Why, one night, I was in a restaurant with our boss, when a lot of them came in and sat pretty near to us. And they weren't much older than you are

either." He looked at her. "By the way," he asked, "how old are you, Miss Revelly?"

"I am — about sixteen," she faltered, wishing that he had not paused to question her.

"Gee, you look older than that. I guessed you were about eighteen or nineteen, anyway."

After a moment's thought, he said partly to himself, partly to the open street:

"I guess I oughtn't to have talked so strong to you."

"Oh, it's all right, Mr. Herrick," replied Hagar. "Maybe it's something I ought to hear. You know I haven't got any brothers to tell me."

"Well, where was I?" he asked.

"You were saying something about being in a restaurant with your boss —"

"Oh, yes. Well, about half a dozen of them came in, and they were mighty pretty I can tell you. Well, we counted how much they were drinking and one little girl — I'll bet she didn't weigh ninety pounds — drank her own dry Martini and part of the fellow's that was next to her, and four glasses of champagne, and she was used to it too, because it didn't affect her at all."

"Oh, how awful!" interrupted Hagar.

"Of course, they are not all like that," he continued. "Some of them fall in love and that straightens them up. It even makes good decent women out of some of them. But tell me," he asked seriously, "what good do those society girls like that do in the world?"

"Don't some of them work among the poor?"

Derisively he replied: "Oh, yes. They work among the poor all right. Somebody wrote a novel once where the good-looking hero worked among the poor. So most of them go down to the slums with the idea in their heads that they're going to meet a hero, too."

He stopped his argument long enough to take a cigarette from a black gun-metal cigarette case.

When he had lit the cigarette, he said, even more seriously: "But what I am driving at, is that a girl ought to work like a man, whether she's got money or not. Of course, if she has got money, then she can do the things that train her mind, and don't bring in much money, like writing, or painting or languages, and be of some service afterwards by going in for teaching. She could do a lot of good that way and cut down some of the taxes that the poor people have to pay to help keep up the schoolhouses and things. "Yes," he went on, "society girls are public burdens, and it's the poor people that pay for their dances and suppers."

"Then ought I go to work?" Hagar asked.

"Well, I guess you really ought to. It would give you something to do and help out here at the same time."

It was this conversation that gave Hagar an entirely new view of her life.

Many times after that she would stop short to ask herself some question about this new project. She said nothing to her mother about it, but as the days and weeks passed she formed a firm resolve.

Then there came one day, a deeper reason for doing so. This was a conversation she overheard between her mother and Mr. Nealy. When brought down to its fullest meaning, her future action now meant the preservation of happiness to the one person in the world whom she loved.

It seemed that Mrs. Revelly had continued to notice how the face of the man she loved brightened up at Hagar's appearance, and that he became more cheerful and gayer the moment the girl entered the room. Slowly she began to understand with a woman's instinct that Hagar

brought to him those things which she knew were passing in herself.

For a time she tried to rival the daughter's freshness, her vivacity and innocence. One day when Hagar's arms were around her neck, she noticed her own thin wrists in comparison with the girl's. Thinking perhaps his waning affection was simply a question of superficial beauty, she resolved to get stouter, and began immediately to eat eggs in quantity and drink rich milk. But in two or three days this so impaired her digestion that she was compelled to give it up. Then she tried resting and massaging her body. Finding this quite unsatisfactory as well as expensive, she undertook a new treatment that she had come across in the beauty columns of the newspapers, which consisted of rolling about on the floor; but this only strained and tired her.

And so she gave up entirely, as a futile quest, this task of inviting back her youth.

However, some harm had been done. A species of hysterical resignation and unrest was left in her, which made her say and do things, that in the time before she had been able to control. Fearing that she might lose the man she loved, her thoughts dwelt incessantly upon some manner of prevention.

She began to use childish expressions and be artificially joyful and vivacious. It pained Nealy to witness this hysterical trait in her and one day, the day Hagar was listening in the next room, he very solemnly begged Mrs. Revelly to leave off her queer actions.

"It isn't you, Rena," he said. "And I hate to see you act this way." He really felt the pathos of it, and was dimly conscious of the reason.

Mrs. Revelly said in answer to his remark:

"You wouldn't mind it in Hagar, John."

He looked at her with some astonishment.

"Rena!" he exclaimed.

Then she came over and kneeled on the floor beside him, taking both his hands and pressing them to her lips for a long kiss.

"John, you do not love me as much as you did," she began.

"Rena, please —"

She interrupted him: "No, you do not love me the way you did when we used to walk together under the trees and be silent for hours. Remember how you used to say that there was a lover's hush let loose in the air, when we would be so quiet? Oh, no, dear, you don't. I know, I feel — and I see how it is when Hagar is around. Why, John, your eyes light up, then you become droopy and quiet. Oh, John, am I not right?"

"Rena, you are a very foolish child to talk this way. You know everything is as it always was. Now what is the trouble?"

"No, you don't understand," she went on. "A woman loves and she can never go backwards in her love. You know the quotation: 'To him who has acquired a taste for wine, water is insipid?' Well, John, so is friendship after love."

She seemed to break completely in an instant. In a hushed, quavering voice, she said: "Oh, my God, John, you don't know how I love you, and how it hurts me to see you look at me with only sympathy and kindness in your eye."

For a moment she paused. "To tell the truth, John," and her voice was more steady now, "I really have to beg you to stay, after Hagar leaves."

He seemed to be a little annoyed at this. "I wish you wouldn't be so foolish," he said impulsively.

"Oh, I can't help it, I feel it — I know it, John," she cried, clutching at his folded hands. "You see my wrin-

kles now, while Hagar brings back youth to you. If you don't love her now, it won't be long before you will, just simply because she represents youth to you."

"I won't answer you if you talk like this." He spoke impatiently and tried to loosen the hold of her fingers.

She went on, speaking in a low hoarse voice. And the while she talked, she searched the depths of his eyes.

"John, I know you are only living up to yourself. You haven't loved me since the day you realized that I was no longer young. Tell me, John, I know it's true, no matter what you say, but I want to hear it from your own lips. You don't care — since you realized that I am growing into an old woman, do you? Please, please, tell me!"

Nealy's face grew red now and he became angry, saying: "Rena, I tell you I won't talk to you on such a subject."

He rose impatiently, but Mrs. Revelly caught at his arm and threw herself down in a heap on the floor at his feet, crying:

"Dear, you are all I have, and I feel you gradually slipping away from me. Please understand. I see it in the way you look at me. Yes, the way you hold me. Oh, John, a woman can tell these things. I see how you get color in your face and light in your eyes the moment Hagar comes into the room. I guess it is my luck."

Nealy raised her head from where she had rested it against his knees. He looked at the throbbing hot temples. Their palpitation seemed the more distressing because of the few covering strands of grey hair. And as he looked at the pale face and felt the clutch of her fingers, he became filled with a great pity and regret.

He took her face between his hands and lifted it to a level with his eyes. Then he kissed her lips, again and

again, whispering, each time: "Rena, I do love you, I love only you. Don't be so foolish."

And the while they were entering into a state of pacification, Hagar in the next room, her head buried in the pillows on the bed, was sobbing with deep tumultuous spasms that shook her whole body.

Standing guiltily at the door she had listened to the whole of the conversation.

"Oh, my poor mother!" she cried into the pillows —
"oh, my poor mother!"

CHAPTER VI

THE boarding place that Thatah and her father found the afternoon after the quarrel, was a three-story brick building that in some former time had probably been a small school or club.

This impression was to be gained from the lower floor of the house, which was separated into three big rooms, each of the same size and appearance. They were large and spacious, and in the front room, which was the better furnished, congregated the boarders after the evening meal. Into this large room, with its majestic palm trees outlined upon the dingy green wall paper, would come the ladies and gentlemen of the house, with the usual ranting and gossipy talk common to a second-class boarding place.

The other two rooms on the main floor were used as a dining-room, and kitchen.

It was not Thatah's fault that such an uninviting domicile held out its gaunt arms to them. One of Professor Revelly's pupils had an aunt living here, a thin old lady, who sympathized deeply with him and who, he felt, understood him. Also in this vicinity lived most of his pupils.

Moreover, Revelly and Thatah, after a few hours of house hunting, were glad to find any place that offered them a decent home. Neither of them felt by nature fitted to interview New York landladies and the experiences they had, served only to prove to them their incompetence.

At one place on their hunt — it was a brown granite stone house on Fifty-fourth Street — they had an especially disconcerting adventure.

A stout lady with tightly curled hair and aquiline nose, which stood out inquiringly in front of her face, had answered their call. The professor was quite disturbed from the very first moment, when she asked him in very coarse tones what his business was. When he noticed a large dirty grease spot on the front of her apron, he wished that they had passed on. But he resolved to make the best of it and very politely answered her.

"Who's the lady with you?" she inquired.

"My daughter, madam," he answered.

Turning her eyes to Thatah, she glanced keenly at her for a moment. The delicate, quiet features and shrinking appearance of the girl, and the man's dark, shiny, long coat and careless linen gave her an entirely false idea.

She asked if they were man and wife.

"She is my daughter, madam," he replied with dignity.

"Well," she answered, "I've just finished an experience which has been recorded in all the newspapers and has nearly ruined my place."

And she went on to say that a few days before, she had harbored a man and a young girl whose appearance was extraordinarily like that of Thatah and her father, but presently the police had informed her, while on a search through her rooms, that the man had some evil influence over the young girl and had enticed her away from some great home of luxury. One experience had been enough for her.

"I don't believe I can take any more chances," she said, looking Revelly full in the face. "You better go to some other place."

The door was closed with an unkind jar.

Revelly, puzzled and hurt, but hardly angry, stood still for a moment and then went down the steps with the perplexed Thatah tugging at his side.

"What did the woman say?" she asked. "I stood too far back to hear."

"Nothing, don't ask me."

"But she said something, father; something that hurt you, too."

He quickened his pace so that she could hardly keep up with him, and Thatah ceased her questioning and mildly followed him.

It was after such an experience that they were glad to find at last at Mrs. Neer's, a place where they were welcomed.

The first night at the new abode interested Thatah greatly. There were a half dozen persons at the table, besides Mrs. Neer and her granddaughter, a young girl of twelve years, and it did not take Thatah very long after she had sat down beside her father, to conclude that these people were typical denizens of a boarding house.

There was an actress, Miss Darcy, who sang in the chorus of a popular musical show, and who wore a sailor suit and dressed very simply.

At night she came home soon after the performance and read in her room, which was thought to be a wonderful example of resistance against temptation. Thatah discovered before long that everyone used Miss Darcy as a model for the chorus ladies of the world. But she was not beautiful and not young any more and she had a very large nose. This might have been the reason for her virtuous life.

Another woman, Mrs. Cortello, was indirectly of Spanish nobility. Her husband had died of broken spirit after a New York business venture, and she was compelled to sell transfer paintings for chinaware.

When Mrs. Neer told the history of this woman to them, Thatah unconsciously exclaimed: "Is that all she works?"

That first evening, a young man at Thatah's side at table informed her that Madame Cortello was also a poetess. He showed her, handed along with the bread plate, four lines of poetry the woman had written for some magazine. The youth told her that these lines meant to him his life, as they expressed the exact feeling in which he held the girl he was courting and would some day marry.

The fellow was a clerk in a patent medicine house that dealt exclusively in mail orders, and, as he explained, he had come to New York full of sentiment and ambition and was determined to lose neither of these two qualities. Mrs. Cortello, he said, was a great inspiration to him. But Thatah was not moved by his enthusiasm and even from that first evening, the smile and manner of Mrs. Cortello roused her intense antagonism.

After dinner the father and daughter lingered as long as they thought necessary to show regard for the others. Then they stole quietly up to their two little rooms at the top of the house.

The larger of them — a bedroom and sitting room in one — was decorated modestly and with a certain comfort. Thatah's room which adjoined, was much smaller; there was a long diagonal crack in the ceiling paper and a dirty threadbare rug on the floor at the side of her bed, but somehow to her girlish eyes, the large window set with geranium plants made up for all these blemishes.

"We'll make my room the sitting room, Thatah," said her father, as he walked over and opened a window.

She did not answer, but to the professor's great surprise, threw herself lengthwise across the bed, and began to cry.

"Don't, child," he said kindly, and without question, for he understood something of the reason for her unhappiness.

But she let loose all her inner feelings, crying out: "Oh, God, I can't stand it here."

"You mustn't be like this, Thatah," said he, with some evidence of control in his own voice. "What is the matter?"

Rather hysterically, she went on, "Oh, father, just think what we have come to."

"At any rate, we are together, dear," Revelly said, to soothe her.

Thatah tried to check her tears a little, blaming herself that by her lack of self control she had increased his unhappiness. But only after some time was she entirely quiet again.

"You mustn't give way to yourself like this, child. I know it's pretty colorless here, but it will be all right. You must wait and see." He petted her soft, white hand. "It will be better to-morrow. The first night, you know. We must expect to feel strange at first."

"But these terrible people, father! How will we hold out?"

"Wait till you know them. They surely have their good traits, too. Yes, we must be patient, Thatah."

From a room across the alley way came sounds of a coarse, popular melody, reluctantly driven from a clanging piano. It floated in to them on the thick, summer air, and Thatah, somewhat quieted now, walked over and lifted the shade.

Directly across the passageway in the house which backed up against them, she could see a stupid looking fellow pounding vigorously upon the keyboard, while back of him, were two others, with their hands on his shoulders. All were bellowing with huge strength, when the one standing nearest the window noticed her, and called the attention of the others. Then all stopped their music and came over to greet her.

With an angry jerk, Thatah pulled down the shade and ran from the window.

The incident dispirited her again for a time, and it was not until late in the evening, when her father gathered together the score of a new symphony which the orchestra was to rehearse in the morning, that her mood was lightened. Then she rose from the bed and seated herself near him, watching him as he gathered the sheets together, content — as he always was when handling manuscript of important scores.

"This is like old times, after all, Thatah. At last there is peace," he said slowly.

"Yes," she answered, but as she looked into his face she was shocked. It might have been the reflection of the light, but there seemed a new hollowness about his eyes and a gaunt, empty expression round his mouth.

"Oh, I do hope you will be happy here, father," she cried, impulsively putting her arms around his neck.

Later as she lay in her quiet little room, staring with wide-open eyes out of the window, her earlier mood of discouragement returned. She thought of what her life was giving her just now, of how the plans she had made for herself, the desires and wishes and little builded dreams, were fading into a sordid present.

She marvelled at the ability she showed to go on unceasingly in the same routine, doing over the same monotonous things and never letting anyone discover the real yearning for happiness that lay within her.

On the following morning, the arrangement for separation was drawn up between her parents.

Thatah never forgot her father's appearance on that day. When they informed him that he must give part of his earnings to his wife, he was stricken speechless with astonishment. The lines of surprise that came to his face, when he realized that he must still work for this woman,

remained indelibly in Thatah's memory for many months.

That was a hard day for both of them. Professor Revelly was so humbled by the hand of the law that his submission was pathetic.

As they passed out between the chairs in the lawyer's office, he whispered to Thatah: "She's rid of us, she's rid of us."

Thatah answered: "Yes, we're lucky, father."

But though she spoke laughingly, she prayed that something might come to her father that would make him strong like other men. He was, at that moment, so dejected and rusty looking. He reminded her of something broken, neglected and worn out.

That day she saw plainly the path that lay in front of her. There seemed no way of avoiding her fate. Her father was lonely and isolated and it was her duty to stay by him all his life. That was how it would go on, she told herself.

In the days that followed, Eman Revelly was overtaken by queer spells of brooding and meditation. It did not take long for the boarders and Mrs. Neer to understand that he was an eccentric, whom it was best to leave unmolested. He said so many things that came strange to their mediocre understanding.

Far better would it have been, had he understood their low caste of intelligence and left his philosophies to smoulder within him, unworded. He could not do this, however, and in a few weeks, by one way or another, he had made himself to the minds of each of them, a strange and unbalanced man. Such an one they had never met.

Meantime, came a new problem—the question of finances. The court had decided that until a divorce was granted seventy-five dollars a month was to be given the wife. The orchestra brought in only one hundred and

twenty-five dollars, and his pupils about twenty-five more, so only seventy-five was left for them. Out of this must come all their expenses, and after paying Mrs. Neer fifty-two dollars for the two rooms and their board, the balance, they found, was not enough to pay for their laundry, clothes and carfare. To add to their difficulties, one of his pupils was able to pay only every six months, because the aunt who was educating her, received her dead husband's pension in that way from the Indian service.

It seemed essential that they find some road out, and, after a period of indecision, the Professor realized the only thing was to find employment for Thatah. Before he spoke to her, however, he questioned himself incessantly. It really seemed to him a right course, even from Thatah's individual point of view, for there was nothing else she could do, and she certainly could not spend her days indefinitely sitting alone in her room. Yet he hated to suggest that she should go out and work for money — to him she seemed still a little girl.

He put off speaking to her from day to day, always waiting for an opportune moment, a moment when she was not too sad nor too gay.

Finally one night he summoned up enough courage to open the subject. In soft, nearly broken tones, he told her that she had probably realized it was not good for her to be so much alone. He had been watching her lately, he said, and had noticed that it was having an effect upon her. Also he wanted her to dress better and go out more. And an easy way of solving the problem was for her to occupy her mind with some kind of work. Moreover, it would bring in a few dollars and make them happier. Then, he told her, he had been fortunate in securing for her a position in the bureau of the opera house. It wouldn't be hard work and she required no other training than her intelligence.

She took it very quietly, and seemed scarcely to notice what he had said, only asking when her work would start.

While this attitude of hers relieved the old man, it distressed him, too; with so much to fight and endure, it seemed hard that Thatah should be indifferent and apathetic.

This was indeed a trying time for the unhappy, broken musician. Things were not going too well for him, even at the orchestra, and he found himself constantly picturing the darkest outcome for the future. He became very nervous and was unable to give his mind any rest. Night after night he was attacked in the same manner, his thoughts making his brain revolve and labor like some mechanical thing.

Being unable to sleep one early morning, he sat drowsily in his chair, looking past the stone ledge of the window down into the street. Sitting there, he saw a huge automobile, like some big black bug, crawl around the corner. It served to throw him into a chain of reveries about his own lack of enjoyment of the world's gifts, made him think of the insuperable chasm that separated him from this sort of life. For hours, he sat there, muttering to himself.

Such spells as these became very frequent with him. Every inanimate thing seemed to bring some significant question to his mind.

He thought a great deal about his wife at these times and how easily she appeared to find happiness.

One day he mentioned this to Thatah. And she answered: "Well, father, isn't it best to take life easy? If everybody was as serious as you, no one would be happy."

"But they are wrong," he argued. "One must work for real happiness."

"Their happiness has the same value to them, hasn't

it?" she asked. "It seems to me happiness could only be the one thing."

He appeared discouraged by her light-hearted view of his mood, and told her that she must take such questions more seriously. "Happiness only takes its value from the things by which you measure it. We have to labor and have sorrow to gain the real thing."

Thatah noticed how his earnestness was affecting him. "Please, father, let's talk of different things," she begged.

But he went on. "No, Thatah, it is good for you to know. I want you to learn the real value in life." He continued to say that one yearns for the unattainable during the first half of his years and mourns for it thereafter. "The old ambitions become less acute," he said; "the new ones less frequent. It is only the need of companionship that becomes exaggerated as time passes."

As he talked, Thatah became more interested, for he delved back into his own life, telling how a little fellow of twelve, with his violin and piano, grew into the lad of twenty.

"I, too, have had my measures for valuation. In those days everyone told me how great a musician I was. I became encouraged, and left the violin, to which I had devoted myself, and went back to the piano, feeling that I must perfect myself on that, too."

He described to Thatah how he had played at the Vienna Orchestral Hall a passionate, throbbing Brahms Capriccio. It was his first public appearance.

"I was only twenty-two, then," he continued, "and the happiness of that day brings back to me youth, whenever I think of it. And when I played a little Chopin Etude for an encore, how they all clapped and applauded!"

He dropped back in his chair. "Now, look at me!" he cried. And for a little he was silent.

Suddenly he got up, went to his trunk and lifted from one of its trays a huge bundle of manuscript.

"Thatah," he began, "I want to tell you a story. Something I have never told anyone." He gently untied the bundle of papers. "Here is a symphony, 'Gwenola Days'—you see I call it. It's a monument to my youth in Vienna."

Handling it daintily, as if it were a piece of fragile lace, he took the different sheets, one by one, and studied them, bowing his head over them and saying: "Each little note was a hope, my dear girl."

For a time he was silent, then continued, softly, "It's like a fairy tale, too. Only, the giant ogre in the final chapter gets swallowed by the dwarf."

As he talked, he became more calm and at last settled in to tell the story.

"I was only twenty at the time, and my parents kept me very close to the piano and violin. In the morning I was up at six, then a little breakfast and practice until midday. In the afternoon, a lesson from Herr Mancker, my master, and then a walk in the park with my uncle, who lived with us. That was the way my days passed.

"You see, they were preparing me for a great career as a virtuoso. Ah, those days! It seemed preordained that I was to become great, too. So they said, at any rate, and I was the clay model in their hands, to do with as they wished.

"We would walk and talk of my tour to America, we sometimes even counted the money I would make. Then sometimes I would be on my dignity with my parents. 'No,' I would assert, 'I shall not stay in America. I will come back to Europe and build a fine big stone villa, all white and splendid. It will set out into the water some place, like Chillon, and there I will work in the summers and live with my princess.'"

"Yes, I had a princess, Thatah; my uncle named her *princess* the first time we saw her. Every day, we met them, she, and a woman of about thirty-five. They seemed to have selected the same hour in the park, for we always met them and in usually the same place. She was pretty, Thatah, a good deal like you. She had soft, white skin, and light hair, and the daintiest, sad little mouth. We would see each other coming in the distance and I felt that she saw me, too, although when we passed, her eyes were always searching the ground.

"That went on for weeks. It was bashfulness on my part, or else fear that my uncle would discover the queer little thrills which surged through me at sight of her, that kept me from being more brazen.

"One day we came upon them at a turn of the path and for the first time our glances met. She looked at me. I blushed hotly. I was conscious of a throbbing joy that was very new to me. And like a coward I looked away."

The musician paused to tell Thatah that there was something in him that always made him hesitate at important moments.

"I believe I should run away if they told me my symphony was to be played," he said. "There is something in me that makes me fear to hear good news. Perhaps it is the unbelief I have in my good fortune . . . Well, I looked up again, just to catch her eyes as she too looked up. I saw that I was not mistaken in thinking that she had recognized me. Her face grew red and white at that instant. I was sure of it.

"'Uncle,' I cried, when they had passed us. 'Who is she, that girl, who is she?'

"'Sie ist hübsch, unsere prinzeßin, nicht wahr?' he answered.

"'Gott!' I cried, 'sie ist wunderbahr.' And I turned

in the road and studied the place where our eyes had met. It was strange, strange, Thatah.

“‘Oh, why didn’t I say something!’ I cried. ‘I could have dared. Why didn’t I say “Good morning, Fraulein,”—anything. Oh, why didn’t I say it,’ I begged in agony of my uncle.

“At least I had not. It is that way in life. The thing that is most worth having to you, the thing for which you have yearned, comes to you so suddenly, that you dare not grasp it.

“For three weeks I had dreamed of her, had talked to her in my fancies. And now when I met her, my courage had forsaken me.

“After that she came no more to the park. The companion had probably noticed, or she had gone away, or I had hurt her. Oh, I had a hundred reasons for her staying away.

“Then, one afternoon, it was a year afterwards, I played with the symphony orchestra at one of their usual popular concerts. I played a sad, melancholy Chopin Polonaise Fantasie.

“To one the piece was filled with thoughts of suffering and gloom and that day I felt it indeed as I played. For my father had been taken ill the Friday night before, and at the same time my master had told me that I must give up my violin if I wished to do solo work, as it was ruining my fingers. I remember as I sat down at the piano that I encountered my master’s eye. He had probably noticed my feelings and he gave me a little nod of encouragement. But he had been mean enough to me before I went on to the stage. ‘Play with feeling, for God’s sake,’ he had begged of me. ‘You are a music box, a cinematograph.

“I was at the piano. I was nervous. It was the biggest thing I had yet attempted and the cruel words

of my master tormented me. When I was about to begin, all alone on that great big platform with the musicians of the orchestra sitting quietly back of me, I felt like a sickly stripling.

"I thought of Goethe's 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt.' Strangely it gave me some strength. My hands went down to the keys for the opening cadenza. . . .

"They told me afterwards that I played well. My professor took me by the shoulders, and shook me. 'Du,' he cried, 'you youngster, you will play yet some day.' Ah, those were very sweet words, Thatah.

"They were still clapping their hands out in front, I heard a few bravos; and I walked back onto the stage, bowed gravely, mechanically, three times, as they told me I must do. I followed their instructions. And then, right down there in front of me, in the first rows, a spot of blue caught my eyes. It seemed to stand out, my eyes were caught and held by it. I can't explain how my youthful heart beat. It was my princess again.

"I waited till the concert was over, and then hurried around to the front of the house. 'This time I won't lose her,' I said to myself. No, not if there were a dozen companions with her.

"She came out nearly among the last. By her side was the same woman. I walked directly up to them. 'Did you enjoy the fantasie?' I asked.

"'Oh,' she said, as she gave a little start. And then what made me fall more deeply in love than ever was that she made no excuses for talking to me.

"'I enjoyed it so much,' she said, seriously. Then, turning to the woman by her side, 'Herr Revelly, this is Mme. Klochert. My name is Gwenola Sabruya,' she added sweetly.

"When she mentioned my name I felt as if I were lifted to another world by her lips, Thatah.

"I met her in the park the next morning at the usual time. Mme. Klochert was a kind woman and let us have many sweet moments alone. It went on for nearly a month. Every day I would meet her, we would talk and be silent together, and every day my heart was filled with ecstatic happiness. In the middle of the night, I would sit up questioning myself, for its reality.

"Then — there came the beginning of sadness. My tower of dreams was dashed to the ground. A little note from Mme. Klochert told me that they could not see me again. She was very sorry, she said, but that day they would depart for a little holiday in Aix-les-Bains, and then they would go back to Rome. But I could not see them in Rome, because there 'Mademoiselle was under other obligations.' They would always pray for my future.

"I found out the truth. She was the daughter of a lady of the court, while I was a musician, albeit my music was 'wonderful.' This rang to the last chime my unhappiness.

"A week later, my father died under the illness that had kept him in bed for a month. I had to take pupils. There were four of us, two sisters and my brother, and I had to work to earn money. It was different now. No more applause, no dreams, no more Chopin; for I had to give up the piano now — but I could not play Chopin after she left me, anyway.

"That was the end, Thatah, and my romantic mind suffered terribly. I likened myself to Byron, to Heine, to Chopin himself — I suffered with despair. My flower had died before I had smelled of its fragrance.

"That night I stole out to the edge of the town and there, lying flat on my back, on the soft grass, watched the red of the sun fade into the horizon and blend with the grey and blue of the evening sky. Every star that

twinkled brought to me a message of lost success and happiness.

"Oh, Thatah," he continued, "you think it makes no difference when you have these youthful dreams? But it makes a great difference. Love remains unchanged through life, everything else changes but that. Only in youth, we are brave, strong, and we dash ourselves against the stone walls, not minding at that time if we bruise or wound ourselves. It is fine, though," his eyes brightened with the thought. "We are innocent, our senses are dulled, our intelligence is numbed, and we are entranced as if by some wonderful reality. . . ."

"Well, I came to America," he went on. "I had nearly completed the 'Gwenola Symphony' by this time and a contract that I had made with an orchestral society here in New York made it fairly easy for me to come over.

"After a year I met a young American girl, your mother, and married her. She was not of German parentage, nor was she musical, but we were very happy together for a time. Her name was Rena Gibson, and I thought that in her I had found the fulfilment of the other, the girl in Rome. But it was not to be, Thatah," — he turned his eyes to the floor — "for you, better than anyone else, know what our marriage has been."

CHAPTER VII

It was only a day or two later that Thatah went to her father's bookcase and in a book came across a line that seemed to have been written for her. It was the first time she had ever dared to delve into the Professor's library. He had often warned her that his books were too deep and unhappy for her. "Read some of the American writers, for a year or two yet," he would say.

"But I thought you wanted me to learn real values," she would argue.

"Yes, but I don't want you to plunge too deeply into the truth at the beginning."

And he would bring home to her a novel that told per chance of a silly love-affair between a man and woman, where to win the maiden, the hero disguised himself as a plumber and stole her off in his wagon, along with the tools and lead pots.

She saw that she could not dare to let him know what really lay buried within her, that she could not let him understand that she too had her thoughts. It would make him wonder and become unhappier, she told herself, if he knew how she suffered, and how she hated life.

Neither could she tell him that the thing that kept her so resigned and calm was not that she lacked understanding but that she had solved the problem of living. She laughed at her own audacity as she thought of it.

Her philosophy was this: There was only one thing in life to have, and that was the thing one wanted most. Days, weeks, years, made no difference, for so soon as

one understood what it was one wanted, one need only fight to get it. And there was nothing to have after that but the enjoyment of it. So what difference was there if one was twenty or fifty years old?

It was this philosophy that had made her forget about time and only wait for the great thing to happen. She wasn't really sure what the great thing was. Sometimes, in the dead of the night, she decided it was the love of some good man. Again she thought it would be to become a great writer, or a musician, or a worker among the poor. It would probably be the last, she thought, because she was not prepared for the others.

In this state of mind she had gone to the little bookcase, not looking for anything other than diversion, and when she saw such long queer names: Nietzsche, Strindberg, Ibsen, Stirner, Hauptman, Tolstoy, she quite decided to leave them secure in their resting places. She was so attracted, however, by one weird title, that she took down the little book. The title suited her exactly. It was something light, she fancied, and she was so sad. "Gay Science" by Nietzsche.

But the very first lines she glanced over seemed to strike her a queer blow in the heart that made her throb and flutter. Then she went further and read something which though it mocked her, sickened her even, seemed to make her every previous thought clear and definable. The lines seemed to tell the real truth. The words stood out in front of her eyes:

"This life, as thou livest it now, and hast lived it, Thou shalt have to live over again, and not once but innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every pleasure, and every thought and sigh, and everything in life, the great and the unspeakably petty alike, must come again to thee, and all in the same series and succession . . ."

Thatah put the book down, for her eyes had filled with tears. After all, the little philosophy she had constructed had only been built to fool herself. Of course, everything was empty, her own life, her father's, her mother's, Mrs. Neer's. What did they live for? What this great man said was the truth about life.

Thatah took the little book in her arms and carried it to her room, as if it were precious and might drop and be broken. Locking the door after her, she sat on the bed, with her legs crossed under her, and read, devouring with beating pulse all the burning irony of her discovery.

The finding of this book opened a new life for her. She was always happier now and felt a pity for those poor people about her who were so ignorant. She became kind to them and put herself out in little ways to please them.

And then began for her a period of self-questioning, of searching for something that was realer than what she knew. It was like taking her inside-self, the self she had kept from her mother and father, and putting it into some deep box, and then looking down at it. In her ears had been poured words that told her that she was odd and different — her father had called her his "vildes kind." Now she had found the explanation.

Thatah was happy those days. In the evening she talked to her father of his music, his work for to-morrow, anything — to be able to get back to her room and live in her books again.

In one book she found a mention of the friendship between Turgenief and Flaubert; odd stirring names for her. She went to the public library and when the girl back of the desk handed to her "Mme. Bovary," the name written on her slip, Thatah noticed that she stopped to eye her. At least Thatah felt conscious the girl was do-

ing this, and she slipped out of the place as though guilty of some wrong act.

But she cared very little. "What do they understand?" she reassured herself.

It was raining and the streets were slippery and as she stepped from the street car to the pavement, the book accidentally fell from her grasp onto the muddy street. When she stopped to pick it up and wiped the mud from the open pages, a line caught her eye: "Emma grew thinner, her cheeks paler, her face longer —"

She hurriedly reached home and read on and on, with the door locked. Soon she was as deeply interested in this new work as she had been in the other and it was not long before she was familiar with the wonderful picture created of a woman where love was gnawing and eating at her soul.

Once she stopped numbly in the middle of a passage, crying: "Oh, how wonderful!" She saw a parallelism between Emma Bovary and herself. Hadn't she gone to bed night after night, aching, hungry, yearning? And hadn't she known what it was to keep others from understanding for fear of abuse?

Thatah read the book through in two days. Her heart pained, her eyes burned for the poor woman.

This reading had a very evident effect on Thatah, and the professor that evening questioned her. But she only explained that she felt dispirited for no reason that mattered.

He startled her, by saying: "Oh, my little girl, life is sad, and sweet and bitter, all at once. You don't know. It hurts my heart that you should work, but what can we do? I love you, I love your dark eyes, and your little thin wrists, and your little mouth that quivers and trembles so when you talk. It makes me think of a baby just opening its eyes for the first time

and finding there is too much light. Yes, I hate it, Thatah, but we've got to be practical. We are in a land where we sweat for the music and the dreams we make for other people. And they think they have paid us because they have given some of their money. Ah, little dear, they call it art. They say: 'Here is two dollars for you. Give me a chunk of your life.' Yes, that is what they do," he went on, shaking his head.

Thatah smoothed back a few grey-turning hairs. "Don't, dear," she interrupted, made unhappy by hearing his serious talk. She was near to telling him of the book she'd found and its soothing recognition of all the horrid things he talked about. Then she hesitated in her caresses, and he, noticing, asked her what she had intended to say.

"Oh, that it doesn't do any good to be so serious," she spoke with emphasis; but the words rang so untruthful in her ears that she felt compelled to leave him and busy herself with the portfolio he had placed on the table.

Revelly studied her for a long time.

"Thank God you don't know, my dear," he said, regarding her as she stood with her back to him. His head shook rhythmically with each word.

It was many minutes after, when Thatah thought she could no longer bear the odd staring way he gazed at her, that he turned around to the piano and with a deep sigh, gradually stroked and caressed the keys until they broke for him into sweet, soft chords, and dainty little arpeggios that ran mysteriously up and down the keys.

Then Thatah joined him, sitting quietly by his side, gazing into his dark grey eyes, and feeling that his period of scrutiny had passed.

For a time he played at random and then as he kept on, fell into a climax of strong octaves and deepened bass

that shook the room. It was as if here were some voice imprisoned, working and working, in its tempestuous way, at the bars that imprisoned it.

And as she leaned over his shoulders and listened to the fiery melody, a strange picture was brought to Thatah's mind: That his heart was the music box of his being and that harmony in the shape of a key, was the only thing that would unlock it. And she saw that the key was worn and rusty, while the doors remained fast.

The idea was so queer, she was on the point of interrupting him and telling of it, when he startled her by saying, as if he had been reading her thoughts:

"You know, Thatah, what is the trouble between us, your mother and me? Well, we are all like delicate instruments, violins or harps, and everyone, anyone, can play on us. And those that love us and understand the kind of music we can give, play real melodies on us, tunes that bring out all the sweet harmony, all the real human feeling that is in us. Or else, they bring out discords, dead, sobbing tones, which is not the kind of music we are fitted to give to them." He added sadly, "Yes, we are funny little violins, Thatah, all of us, and some people make us give them such bad, pitiful music."

His voice was a little broken as he turned away from her. "Heine knew this. And he, too, suffered the same way."

He was back at the keys, when he added: "You must know Heine some day, Thatah, when you are older."

Then he lost himself again in a wild melody, yet a melody so tender and noble and caressing, so full of yearning, so like a sighing, or a half-muttered appeal, that it seemed to Thatah that here was revealed the hidden man she knew was her father. She felt she had never known him so thoroughly before. They called him eccentric, weak, crazy, "with no business head," but as she studied

the bent figure, it seemed that now, for the first time, she was meeting the *real* father.

Revelly must have been conscious of her speculative regard, for he suddenly wheeled around on the little stool and with a voice that was stirring and passionate, said: "Thatah, you hear this music? You — you — bring it out of me, my little girl."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Thatah and her father went to the office of the Metropolitan Opera House, where she was to receive the position the professor had arranged for her, they were ushered into a large room whose high walls were covered with pictures of the various performers at the opera. The familiar thick face of the great tenor, in costume for Rudolpho, the petite, dainty figure of Cho-Cho-San, and all the rest, made Thatah feel as if she were shifted into another world.

"Mr. Graveur will come in any minute," remarked her father, after they were seated. "Don't seem so bored. You will like the work. It is good here."

The door opened and a tall man whose age was in the forties, came in and greeted them. He was deferential and kind.

"My daughter, Mr. Graveur. Thatah, Mr. Graveur."

They shook hands and all sat down close to a heavy mahogany table, on which were piled innumerable books and papers.

"Your father is an old friend, Miss Revelly, and I hope we'll find something to keep you interested," began Mr. Graveur, smiling.

Thatah thought this a very nice way for him to say her job was ready.

They talked on about different things for a few minutes — the orchestra, the new director, and the prima donna, who had stopped a recent performance because the kimona for Cho-Cho-San's baby did not fit.

Thatah had been given her preliminary instructions

and they were on the point of leaving, when a little thin-faced woman, very nervous and excited, came in without knocking.

The father and daughter stood by while she interviewed the secretary, and Thatah was given her first view of life behind the stage.

"Oh, Mr. Graveur," the woman cried; "what is it you think they have done now? Well, my name, understand, that is first in Warsaw, in Moscow, right at the head of the Ballet, right under our leader, is now put after that nasty woman Mr. Perrini likes. I told you it would be so. He likes her. Everybody knows it."

She went on to say it was terrible that in America an artist must bow her head, because another woman had a pretty nose. When she was pacified and had left, Mr. Graveur explained to Thatah that as he was also secretary to Mr. Perrini, the impresario, he was compelled during the summer to take all the complaints.

"I'm like a social secretary in an embassy," he said, smiling. "The Ambassador does as he wants and has me do what must be done."

Thatah was required to be at the Bureau at ten o'clock the next morning. Work was piling up for the opening of the season, and the memory of the past soon became lost in her many new occupations.

As the days went on, she wondered to herself sometimes how hardships could be so easily forgotten. She was astonished, too, to find that she actually enjoyed her work, and to notice that it was with a good deal of genuine pleasure that she went to Mr. Graveur's office each morning, and that what she did there seemed to her really not like work at all.

Mr. Graveur was soft-voiced, and his big stature and hardened face made the words he spoke seem even kindlier than they really were. To hear him say, "That's it ex-

actly, Miss Revelly," as he did when she performed some task correctly, was very sweet to her.

Gradually she forgot all the quarrels, forgot how she had suffered in the knowledge of her mother's rendezvous, forgot even the stupid sordidness of the boarding house. Little by little all the details of her former life escaped her. She came to look back upon that past time as something to be viewed separately from anything in which she now took part.

Whenever she called at the little office upstairs for her salary, she would say to herself, musing over the situation: "A week ago, I came here — two weeks — three weeks." But it seemed almost as if it were the only life she had ever known.

CHAPTER IX

ALTHOUGH Thatah found herself placed so happily in her new position, and her father was at least temporarily more pleased than he had been since the parting of the family, Mrs. Revelly was compelled to travel on a road less smooth.

One day soon after her conversation with Nealy, she came home to find the following letter lying addressed to her on the dressing-table in her bedroom:

"Darling Mother:

I heard your talk with Mr. Nealy. I was in your room and I could not help it. I heard what you said and for the last few days you don't know how unhappy I have been thinking about it. Ever since then I've been thinking what I shall do. You know how much I love you. I am not going to let you be unhappy through me. So I have thought about it very much and I know that if I could go some place so that you two can be together without me, then he won't think about me and everything will be all right. Honestly, I know Mr. Nealy doesn't care for me and he has never said anything to me except what you have heard, but I think I ought to go away.

That is what I have arranged to do. And it is only because I love you, mother. You know that. I am not going to let you be unhappy through me. I have made up my mind to get a job some place anyway as I have not any right to stay at home and not do anything. I think every girl ought to work and make some money. Even if she was rich she ought to do something. I have been to Siegel-Cooper's and Macy's. But they did not have anything for me and so yesterday I went to Rheinchild's Department Store on 6th Ave. and I got a good job there. Mr. Herrick gave me a letter to somebody he knew

there. He doesn't know but what you wanted me to do it, and please, mother, don't let him think any different, because he has been so nice about it. I moved my trunk just now while you are down town and I'm going to leave this on your dresser.

Please don't worry because I am all right. Miss Gillespie, the lady who is in charge of my department, told me where I could get a nice room at the boarding house where she lives. So I went there and got an awful nice little room right next to hers. It is at 297 Fifty-sixth Street and that is where I am going now. The lady of the house is real nice too, so everything is all right. I told her I was from Albany, because I thought maybe if I told her I lived in New York, she would wonder why I didn't stay home. You know I could not tell her the reason for that.

Now please don't come after me because I am doing this for you. I will write every day and come and see you all the time. I love you with all my heart and I know how unhappy you are. You were unhappy enough when father was at home.

Your loving daughter,

HAGAR."

At first Mrs. Revelly could not believe that this was anything other than childish humor on the part of Hagar, but gradually she began to realize it was true, and was overcome by a spell of grief and hysteria that neither Fanny nor Mr. Nealy could quell.

Her impulse was to rush immediately after Hagar and bring her home by force. But Nealy advised otherwise, thinking that Hagar's wilful nature might make her more rebellious and obstinate than ever.

So she immediately wrote a letter to Hagar, which Nealy promised to take, without in any way indulging in a verbal argument:

"My dear darling Hagar:

Your letter has come like a stroke of lightning, and it has stricken your poor mother. For God's sake, Hagar, don't be

so foolish. You don't know how terribly unhappy you are making me. So please, please, come back and don't be so foolish. Mr. Nealy is taking this letter to you, which proves that everything is all right. He watched me write this letter and you can understand that he wouldn't take it to you, if he felt anything like what you think. And I am not coming after you, which is what I should do.

I can't believe that my own dear Hagar should do such a wild, impulsive thing. Of course, dear, I know you love me and that you think you are doing right because it is for my sake. But please think, dearie, and know that this is bringing me a thousand times the unhappiness I would feel even if the other were true.

Please come back with Mr. Nealy.

Your heart-broken Mother.

P.S.—When you do an unforeseen act like this, darling, it scares me, and makes me feel that I have raised you to be as old as you are and still do not know you or understand you at all. Haven't you been happy at home? Oh, my dear child, it makes me think of how quiet you always are around the house. Surely, it isn't because you think I am doing wrong. No, I won't believe that. My darling, you must come back with Mr. Nealy. The torture your mother shall suffer until her little one comes back, will be unendurable."

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"Mother:

I am writing this while Mr. Nealy is waiting. He says he is going to take me back by force if I don't come back willingly. Now, I will not have him do anything like this, and it will only make matters worse.

Honestly, I like it here. I have got a dandy job at Rheinchild's, in the waist department, at six dollars a week and Mr. Greenfield, one of the owners, and managers, says I can get seven or eight dollars pretty soon. I like it here a lot. Mr. Nealy will tell you that I have a nice little room with a pretty red carpet and the sun coming in through a real big window. I have been thinking since I left this afternoon and I know that I am not doing any good at home, just hanging around.

I think that girls ought to work, like men. So please, darling mama, do not worry and let me do this. There are some girls and fellows here and the landlady says that they have a dandy time playing and singing at night in the parlor. Really, I was getting so lonesome all the time at home. That was why I was so quiet. I do want to work and make my own money. Just think how nice that will be. And if I was making eight dollars a week I could bring some of it to you. You can rent my room and that will help a lot, too. And then you know it will be the same about Mr. Nealy if I come back. And I want you to be happy.

All my love.

HAGAR.

P.S.—Mr. Herrick says he will call on me here. He is so nice, mother. Please do not say anything to him, as I would hate to have to explain why I really left. He thinks everything is all right.

I have rented this place by the month anyway and of course, couldn't give it up. Mr. Nealy says you are sick in bed because I have gone away. Please, mother, do not worry and I will come and see you as soon as you say everything is all right, and that you won't hold me and keep me from coming back here. I will not leave here now and am going to follow the plans I have made."

.
"My precious Child:

I'm in bed and they won't let me leave. Oh, Hagar, why will you persist in driving me nearly crazy? I can't understand you. When Mr. Nealy came in so silently just now and gave me a letter instead of bringing to me my precious girl, I nearly fainted. He was disgusted and would not answer any questions, only saying, 'Read—read.'

I see that I can't avoid having you away from me to-night. Oh, darling, you are breaking my heart. I am so weak and trembling and have terrible pains in my head. But if Mr. Nealy would let me I would come to you to-night anyway. And I would hold you in my arms and kiss your dear little cheeks, until you understood.

Hagar, you are young and impulsive and I have always let you have your way. But this is too serious. I am blaming myself for not explaining to you more fully my relationship with Mr. Nealy. I feel that maybe you are thinking of this. Surely you know a mother's love is different and the atmosphere in our home has always been good and pure. But you are making me blame myself terribly.

We mustn't write any more letters. It makes me suffer too much.

Don't be so foolish as to worry about the agreement about the rent. We'll fix that.

If you don't come as soon as you get this, I am coming to you, whether I am able or not.

My darling, I love you. Please come to my open arms."

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"Darling mother:

I will not come home. That is, not now. I am going to stay the month out here and decide one way or the other. Then if everything is not the way I think it is, I will come home.

I only received your letter just as I was leaving the house this morning for the store and am writing this during my noon hour. Mr. Nealy came to the store about a half hour ago and made a terrible scene, talking about child-labor, and everything, and then he got excited and tried to pull me in front of all the girls. I hate him and would not think of going home now. He has not got any business to put his hand in my affairs like that. You ought to have seen him. He was acting just like he was crazy. You can imagine how I felt in front of all the girls.

I never saw anybody so mean and excited and I hate him. I am all right and please don't worry.

Your loving daughter,
 HAGAR."

Hagar received a short note from her mother on the following day. It said: "As you wish, my poor, foolish girl. I see it is of no use to force you, and you are very thoughtless and stubborn. Still, I want you to know that

the home is always waiting. I am coming to you as soon as I get up."

Many times in the following days, after an exciting interview with her mother, Hagar would stop short to ask herself whether she ought to hold out against her mother's wishes. But she had begun to enjoy and appreciate her new life, and she was loath to give it all up. She had a new understanding of things — an understanding that would make her stop short in the middle of the street, and ask of herself questions.

There was much fun in the evenings for her at the new place, and for the first time in her life was she able to buy things with her own money. At the store, too, she came in contact with so many new people and ideas. She soon learned that in the ways of the world she was like a baby, and this was something she tried to overcome at once. She was really ashamed to let anyone see how little she knew and understood. Listening to the other girls' conversations, she would stand and wonder, asking herself why it was that she had been so ignorant and learned so little. The other girls had so much pleasure out of things that she could not understand at all. It gave her an intense craving to get a peep into the world and be as wise as they.

Other things came up, also. For the first time in her whole life, she bought in the hosiery department, at a special rate, a pair of silk stockings. This she did on the day she received her first salary and as she walked away from the counter she believed that there was coming to her, for the first time, a peep into the glories of a strange new world.

After a number of weeks had passed, Mrs. Revelly seemed to be reconciled. There was always in her mind to comfort her the feeling that Hagar would soon return,

and that she must let the impulsive nature of the child run its course.

Although mother and child saw each other very often, Hagar would never eat at home nor take the chance of meeting Mr. Nealy. There was no doubt that Hagar, who at first had left home because of a desire that she should not be the cause of her mother's unhappiness, was now so much happier in her freedom that she could not think of giving it up. The days became for her, instead of monotonous passages, vehicles that lightly bore her to other roads.

At last she saw that her repeated pleadings that she be left alone had succeeded, for Mrs. Revelly rented out her former room to a young public school teacher. Hagar when she heard this, felt that now she was at last permanently established in her new life.

She had meantime begun to meet and take interest in the people of her new circle. Perhaps of them all Miss Gillespie, who lived in the next room, was the most sympathetic and kind to her. This woman was a thin, freckled face, energetic little person and the two very shortly struck up a friendship. Hagar learned from the nervous little woman a great many new things.

One night, Miss Gillespie made a confidant of her. It all started with giving her opinion about a girl whom she knew in the chorus of a musical show on Broadway. From this, led by Hagar's questions, she went on to tell of her own marriage and the outcome of it.

"Oh, but isn't divorce wrong, Miss Gillespie?" Hagar asked.

"Not a bit of it!" was the woman's vehement answer. "All this rot about the moral side of divorce makes me sick. It's like the pale-faced woman who says she won't use rouge because it isn't right. She neglects a remedy

that might make her better looking, just because she thinks there is some moral reason, and yet, the result is physical because her looks stay the same. That proves she's not logical. And it's the same with divorce. You can stay miserable if you want to, if you think it is wrong to get a divorce. But I didn't have any scruples along that line. He was a fool and a brute and I got rid of him. That's all there was to it."

With the lamp throwing its soft glow through the red shade, they sat on the end of the bed and talked till midnight. It was the first real conversation with any woman except her mother, that Hagar had experienced in her sixteen years of life.

She found Miss Gillespie a peculiar person, who talked gaily, then of a sudden became so quiet that for minutes she sat without even a movement of her body. Sometimes she would change her mood so suddenly that Hagar, from sheer perplexity, would not know whether to laugh or be silent.

Once she did laugh rather inopportunately, and Miss Gillespie looked at her with dull grey eyes just showing from between the lids. "Oh, don't laugh at me," she said. "Just listen and I'll teach you a lot, little sister."

One night, after they had become more intimate, Miss Gillespie broke into talking rather fully about her life.

"No, it hasn't been all gay with me, my little friend, I can tell you," she told Hagar. "The world kicked me pretty good once, and I am just kicking back. I married a fellow because I really thought I loved him, and all he married me for was because he wanted somebody to be with him. I was the only one with whom he kept company, or who paid any attention to him. Then he made love to me and I took it all in and believed it, like a big fool.

"Yes, he would have made love to a bronze figure in

a museum, if there hadn't been anything else around. He was that kind of a man. You don't want to believe men, anyway. They make love a lot of times, just to see how well they can do it, just to see if they've lost their hand at the game. Well, we weren't married very long before I found out how selfish he was, and that I was just a piece of furniture to him. I rebelled, and it got so, after that first big fuss, that I just couldn't stand him to come near me."

She stopped her narrative long enough to interpolate, "Oh, you don't know what a wonderful thing it is, just to want to have come near you the man you want. I tell you nobody ought to marry unless they've got that kind of a feeling. People may have money, big homes, and a lot of machines tagging them around; still if they haven't got that great big throbbing feeling in their bodies — why, nothing amounts to anything. That's what makes a lot of these rich women do so many funny things, like running off with their coachmen and chauffeurs. Yes, that's my religion — that is, if I ever get married again."

She fell suddenly into one of her trance-like silences.

"Where was I?" she asked after a moment. Then as Hagar reminded her, she went on: "Well, I got a divorce, made up my mind that feeling and all that is very well if you both have it, but that it always puts a woman in the hole if *she's* the only one who has it. Maybe it's all a joke anyway."

"Don't you think you'll ever get married again, Miss Gillespie?" asked Hagar.

The woman took Hagar's hands and gently fondled them.

"Call me Mabel, child — you know me well enough for that," she said.

"Won't you ever get married?" persisted Hagar.
Miss Gillespie smiled, somewhat queerly.

"Well, no — not unless I find a man who loves me so much he'll forget whether I love him or not. And that will never be." She thought for a time, then went on:

"It's strange, little friend, all right. Just like the way the rounder watches his little sister. He is bad right enough, but he wants that little sister to be as pure as snow. I guess that is about the way I am. When I come across the man who is as good and innocent in his thoughts as I ought to be, then I'll make him marry me before he knows it. But I don't believe you can find that kind any more. At least, not in the big cities — in the country maybe, but then they'd be dummies."

"What difference does it make where a man lives?" asked Hagar — she could guess, but she wanted to keep Miss Gillespie talking.

"Why, in town the men are all bad. Women are another sex to them, you know, and they feel their duty is to win over them, show their manliness, get the best of them just like savages — one tribe against another. And they've got the money to pay for it. That's it." In a more shadowy voice, she said: "And I guess there are some people who get married, along just such lines."

She continued slowly and quietly now, nearly soliloquizing to herself, while Hagar listened.

"Yes, the man I want is the man who knows and yet stays good because his heart is good. You know the man who saves the girl from drowning because he is a good swimmer is no hero. He only does his duty. And that is the way it is with being good. It takes temptation, sin all around, to try you out. And then when you're good, little girl — why, then you're good." She broke off into a whisper. "And I'm bad, and I only tell it to somebody like you, who is just starting out, when we are together like this, when it's dark and the walls don't listen, and I can tell it straight.

"I'm unhappy because I'm bad, and yet — I am not bad — like other women. It's all in my mind. I just want to get even with them for what they've made me go through. You're just starting out. Oh, I hope you'll never feel the way I do. . . . You won't if you take my word that only the really good people in the world are really happy!"

Hagar went to her work the next morning with a feeling of sudden maturity, ebbing in and out, like the tide, through her being. She had come upon a great, new, indefinable thing. It seemed to pervade her. All of a sudden she understood how her mother, or Thatah, or her father, could be sad or happy over nothing but the conditions of things. Hitherto she had always thought that only sickness or injury could make one suffer.

Often before she had said to herself as she watched the misery of others, "Why are they unhappy? There hasn't anything happened." Now she understood.

This new understanding filled Hagar's days for her now. She did not find as much pleasure in playing the childish games, or in singing ragtime songs of an evening. Very often she would go quietly to her room and sit by the window, happy to have a moment alone in which she could think. Many times she would find herself standing quietly in some public place wrapped in thought. This would make her angry and she would clench her small fist and try to fight off the queer feeling that enveloped her. It was strange how little things would plunge her into this mood. Often it would come just at the sight of some man whose face she had not even seen, or in the passing of some stranger in a moving vehicle.

CHAPTER X

MISS GILLESPIE had charge of the girls in the cheap shirt-waist department. She allowed them to have their way in a great many matters and accordingly was much beloved, and the manager, Mr. Greenfield, gave her permission to follow her own judgment, since she was so well obeyed by them. But the head of that side of the store was a tall and very thin lady, who wore glasses and a continuous smile upon a face which easily showed in its lines a very disagreeable temper. This woman was really in charge, but from past experiences the girls knew of her temper, and always carried their complaints to Miss Gillespie, who smoothed out each little controversy with Miss Gibbs in diplomatic manner.

Under Miss Gillespie's tutelage, Hagar soon became well acquainted with the machinery of the big store. She would register the instant of her arrival on a big round time machine, and hang her wraps away with the other hundreds of girls, just as if she were only another one of the prisoners in some jail and with as much mechanical unconsciousness as the others.

Hagar became quickly initiated in other ways, too. Although Miss Gillespie was kind to her, she was compelled to submit to the rigid rules and regulations of the establishment with as close obedience as any of the other employés. One morning she was fined for being late, and again when a shirt-waist had fallen down from a pile, a floorwalker from another department came past and reprimanded her. She learned that the store had in its employ detectives who were paid by the management to watch

the girls quite as carefully as they watched the customers. But it pleased her to be in a position where there was a constant stirring and interest, and the rules to which she was compelled to submit bothered her very little.

One afternoon Mr. Herrick stopped in to see her, and found her waiting on a big fat woman, with a puffed red face, who persisted in having her take down one waist after another to inspect the lace or the collar, only to push it back disgustedly and to ask for something of an entirely different color or pattern. Hagar found her temper surging as she waited upon the woman and was on the point of asking for Miss Gillespie, when Herrick came up, his big broad shoulders looming above the crowd of women that surrounded the counter.

And for the first time she did what she had learned was an easy way to get rid of troublesome customers. She passed the woman on to the girl at her side, who in turn passed the lady to another partner. But this girl was busy, and compelled the woman, whose temper had long ago become ruffled, to either wait or leave.

Hagar and Herrick had not met for over a month. He had been compelled to go out of the city in connection with some contract that his firm had made, and he was now apparently very pleased to see her.

"Well, some difference, Miss Hagar, isn't it?" he said as he greeted her.

He looked at her close-fitting black waist with its little delicate lace at the collar.

"You look — pretty nice," he faltered, in boyish fashion. "How are you?"

"Oh, I'm fine, Mr. Herrick."

"Your mother told me," he said, "that you didn't have to work, but that you were doing it of your own accord. Of course, I understood, but didn't say anything. But you certainly did right."

He looked around. One little woman with a bedraggled bird of paradise on her hat was holding on to the end of a coarse muslin chemise trimmed with cotton ribbon, while another woman had her fingers tightly clasped on the other end, both wanting the garment, and both having seemingly discovered it at the same moment. At last Miss Gillespie was called in to settle the dispute over the bargain.

"Do they fight like that at your counter, too?" he asked of Hagar, with an amused smile on his face.

"No—that is—I don't know. We haven't had a sale since I've been here."

"Well, if you ever need any help, call on me," he said, laughing.

Before he left he made an engagement with her for the following Thursday evening.

"We'll go to some show," he said.

"Gee, that'll be fine," she answered.

And as she watched him walk out between the rows of women, who looked like pygmies beside him, she felt rather proud.

Later in the afternoon Mr. Greenfield, the manager of the store, came along and stopped in front of her counter. Hagar felt the color surge to her face.

"Well, Miss Revelly, how's the work getting on?" he asked.

Although he had been stopping at her counter nearly every day for the past few weeks, she still felt bashful whenever he approached. It may have been she was conscious that the eyes of all the other girls centred upon her, for she knew how very seldom it was that the manager stopped and talked to any of the others.

She replied to his question, "Oh, I'm getting along fine, Mr. Greenfield."

He had already passed on, had even nodded a parting

greeting to Miss Gillespie at the head of the aisle, when he turned and came back to her.

"If you get tired, don't hesitate to sit down," he said, in a soft, kind voice. "You don't look well."

"What did he say to you?" asked the girl at her side, as soon as the manager disappeared at the head of the aisle.

"Oh, he —" Hagar was near to telling, but something whispered that it was more than an extra privilege which the manager had given her. She answered that he had simply asked her how she liked the work.

"What did you tell him?"

The girl was eyeing her steadily, and it rather embarrassed Hagar to be questioned so closely. It aroused her anger a little.

"Why, what do you want to know for?" she said boldly.

"Oh, don't be so innocent," came the girl's answer. "He likes you. I just thought I'd put you wise. I heard him asking Miss Gillespie about you as I was going to lunch yesterday."

Gradually Hagar began to realize the truth of this, and in one way or another she became aware of Mr. Greenfield's attentions to her. She even felt that he ought not be so kind to her, from a business standpoint, and she accordingly acted more dignified than she felt when he passed a kind word to her, just so the other girls would not notice.

In the following days he came to the aisle more often, never failing to give her some pleasant word of recognition. And one day, he stopped long enough to tell her in low tones that she should come to his office that evening to receive a letter which entitled her to the same discount price in any of the departments, that was allowed to the department heads themselves. To give such a

thing to a salesgirl was unprecedented, though Hagar hardly realized it.

"If you don't need anything now, you probably will later on," he said, as he looked at the little thin silk waist that showed, through its worn threads at the elbow, a faint suggestion of her arm.

Hagar thanked him, and that night, found her way to his private office. As she opened the painted glass door, a feeling of consternation and fear stole through her. She wondered how she would act in front of this important man.

Hesitating for only a moment, however, she then gently knocked.

Inside she saw Greenfield with his dark, shining, smooth hair and clean-shaven face, bending over the desk.

He noticed her quite as soon as she had gained the room, and asked very politely if she would pardon him for another moment while he finished with some work.

"Just sit down, Miss Revelly, I'll be through in a minute," he said kindly.

When he had finished he pushed aside the paper that had occupied his attention, and looked up at her.

"Did you have a hard time finding this place?" His tones were so quieting she felt instantly at ease, and loosened her nervous grip on the cords of her purse.

"I'm pretty hard to reach up here," he went on. "Last year I thought I would take a place back of the alteration department on the third floor. But I can work better here where it is so quiet, even though my friends do have to go on a tour of exploration whenever they want to find me."

Hagar agreed with him that it was quieter here.

"I'll make out your slip," he said, and took down a little box of yellow printed cards. Writing her name at

the bottom of one, he handed it to her with a gentle smile.

"There you are, Miss Revelly, and let me know whenever things don't go just right."

"You are very kind, Mr. Greenfield," said she, with an intense desire to get out of the door as soon as possible.

He turned the knob for her and wished her good-night, and before she knew it she was in the elevator again.

At the supper table that evening she experienced a certain feeling of aloofness and superiority over her fellow boarders. She was not even bothered by the brassy voice of Miss La Motte, a chorus girl whom she abhorred because of her heavily pencilled lashes.

But, when she reached her room, the place seemed unusually stuffy, small and uncomfortable.

The days went by evenly enough after that and Greenfield's kindness to her was a source of much happiness. Somehow his notice of her gave her self-assurance and poise.

Herrick came quite often to see her too, and she was always glad when she heard from him or found him awaiting her in the little parlor downstairs.

He had been getting along very well and proudly told her that a design of his for a window had been accepted by the company. There was a good deal of comfort and pleasure for them both in their meetings, as he talked about her work and asked her advice on different subjects. He was still boarding with her mother but never discussed home matters. However, one night when they were going down in the subway to the Brooklyn Bridge station for Coney Island, he said very suddenly, "I can't understand why you don't come home."

The train was rushing through the dull warm atmosphere and he had to speak loudly.

"You come there often enough, why don't you move back? Just think how nice it would be to see each other all the time like that."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," she replied.

"You couldn't?"

"No."

"I don't see why not."

"You don't know — all the facts," she said mysteriously. "If you did you wouldn't ask me to go back. Then I'm happier the way things are, anyway."

"What are — the facts?"

She hesitated. "Oh, just a family secret," she answered, refusing to divulge anything further.

The last closing days of the gay resort were approaching and they found very few people. Everything looked so dreary, they decided they would first go to some pavilion and get a drink. And it was after they had reached a restaurant done in Japanese fashion, and were sitting over a lemonade and a glass of beer, that she suddenly broke the long spell of silence and put to him, a hypothetical question, embroidered in words that were forcedly disinterested.

"Tell me, Mr. Herrick —"

"Call me Frank," he interrupted. "You might as well. I guess this is about the tenth time I've asked you to!"

She laughed. "Well, Frank, then, if you'll have it so. I'm going to ask you a certain question and I want you just to answer it the way I ask it, and don't think it applies to me or anything."

He was very attentive in the instant.

"At your service," he said, with a mock effort at being dignified.

"Well," she continued with deliberation; "if you were a girl who lived at home, with her mother and her father — and — your father was — dead, and another man loved your mother very deeply — and you found this other man was beginning to care for you and breaking your mother's heart — what would you do then? Wouldn't you leave, too?"

He looked at her in surprise. "Is that your case, Hagar?"

"Why — of course not. But I know a girl in a fix like that."

"What did you say *too*, for, then?"

"Did I say — *too*?"

"Sure, you did."

"Well, I don't know why I said that, I didn't mean to," she replied, much confused.

The young man gave her question some very deep and apparent thought before he answered her. "I don't know what I would do, Hagar. If I was the daughter, and thought the man loved my mother so, I'd wonder, I suppose, why they didn't get married."

"Oh, I forgot to say that in this case they couldn't get married because the man was so poor."

Herrick puckered his lips. "Rather a complicated affair, isn't it?" Then he asked why the man didn't work harder and make more money.

"Oh, he can't make money — he's a writer," she answered, innocently.

Herrick thought for some time, interspersing his questions with shallow gulps of beer. Her problem changed him into a person of serious mien and ruffled brows.

"It's pretty complicated," he said at last. "But I suppose it would come down to this. If that man cared enough for my mother, he wouldn't care for me — and if he cared for me, I suppose my mother would be glad

if she knew I cared for him. But if the girl doesn't care for him and the mother —"

"Oh, you don't understand," she exclaimed. "Let's talk about something else."

He looked at her a little hurt. It seemed to him that, had she given him time, he would have cleared the situation.

"As you wish, my child," he said, with the thought that Hagar was a strange person.

Then he suggested a ride on the switch-back.

"Oh, I'd be afraid," she cried, at the same time glad of the suggestion.

"Oh, you needn't be. I'll — hold you tight," he told her.

He bought the two tickets of a vender in the middle of the empty street, and then going through the turnstiles they jumped into the last seat of a moving machine as it whisked past them to a stop.

"It's better in the last seat," he explained.

For a moment the little wheels began to move under the cars, and the car had no sooner gained a momentum as they rushed along the shining, black, narrow tracks, than they reached one of the steep inclines. There was a grating, screeching sound, a sudden jerk, a plunge, and a withering jar as they flashed up on to a high turn.

"It's a little scary, at first, isn't it?" he said loudly in her ear. "This isn't your first time, is it?"

She shook her head, thinking it better to answer him in this fashion than to yell a reply above the din and clangor of the rushing cars.

Then they whirled past a curve into a long, black tunnel-like passage. Here it was very dark and the two cars tore along madly, as if the first one were a frenzied thing, running away from the desperate, plunging pursuit of the second.

With one hand Hagar held tightly to her red sailor straw hat, while with the other, she frantically grasped a narrow brass rail in front of her.

And now came a precipitous lunge of the cars, with two shorter jerks followed by another and deeper plunge. It made her cry out in fear. Her hat was tearing loose from her hair and she felt herself whirling around and around, and thrown from one side of the car to the other.

Herrick kept one hand back of her and as they passed around the last curve, partly by intention, he allowed himself to come against her.

Hagar felt his arm around her in that moment and his face against her own. A second later and their car glided gracefully into a long, well-lighted passage-way, lined by people awaiting their turn.

"Do you want another trip?" he asked, as they stepped out.

"Lord, no!" she answered.

She waited until they were well out of the building before she spoke again. Then she surprised him by bursting out with a great show of temper.

"What do you mean, Mr. Herrick, by trying to kiss me?" she said to him fiercely.

"Why, I—I was only holding you in the car," he answered with a guilty smile, as much as to say: "Well, what difference would it have made if I had?"

"Well, don't you do it again," she said hotly. "You don't act like a man—who understood women."

No sooner had she said the words than she wondered whence they had sprung from. They sounded strangely familiar to her ears. Only after some time did she recollect a conversation in which Miss Gillespie had related how she had handled a man that got "too fresh."

Herrick and Hagar walked along for a few minutes, the entire space of the sidewalk separating them.

Then he spoke up. "It's no use for you to get so worked up about it. I like you and you know it. And we've known each other pretty long anyway. We're not children, any more."

She appeared to be weighing his argument, then in a manner that showed her temper had abated, said:

"How old are you?"

"Guess."

"I can't."

"Well — just say anything, twenty-one — twenty-five —"

"Oh, I guess you're about thirty," after appearing to have studied the matter carefully.

Pleased a good deal because her fury had lessened, but more because she thought him much older than he really was, he gave a boisterous laugh.

"Why, I'm only twenty-two," he said. "Though I never let 'em at the shop know it." Very proudly he added: "They think I'm about twenty-eight, I suppose."

They talked on, quite friendly again. Knowing that he was nearer her own age seemed suddenly to make the situation infinitely pleasanter for her. She could not word the thought, but had she been able, it would have been that now he seemed less the lover and more the friend, or better perhaps, that he was more a playmate and would understand her games. Hagar had a peculiar understanding of men, which made her feel instinctively that from the older men should she fear love making and that younger men were meant to be friends or playmates.

It was past one o'clock in the morning when they reached her home.

In the darkened vestibule, their faces quite touched in a search for the keyhole. Suddenly Herrick reached his

arm around her waist and drew her to him, and with a diplomacy bred by instinct and contact with her sex, he looked silently into her face.

"You're a dear little girl, Hagar," he said, and then gently, well before she was aware of it, he kissed her tenderly, firmly, on the lips.

The silence about them, the faint rays of the electric light on the corner, everything that had a part in the situation, seemed to give silent consent. Nor had she a wish to offer resistance; though when she had run up the stairs and reached her room, she could not account for her lessened self-control. Instead of being angry, she was queerly pleased and comfortable. She felt still the pressure of his hands — and the imprint of his lips — felt this so strongly she even went over to the mirror with an odd sensation of shame, to see if there still remained on her lips some sign of his daring.

She did not think that she loved him; she really forgot his identity at that moment. It was only the kiss that remained by her — a picture, nearly the first picture, of an emotion created by a man.

And the bouquet of it hovered perilously near her throughout the night, even anesthetizing her sense of duty, so that in the morning, for the first time since she had entered this new life, she did not hear the jubilant approach of day, voiced by the shrill cries of every alarm clock on her floor.

Instead, she overslept herself, and was compelled to go to her work without first breakfasting.

CHAPTER XI

Not long after accepting her position at the Opera, Thatah discovered there was to be derived, even from the details of her work, a real pleasure. The simplest act, like going to the door and informing callers that Mr. Graveur would see them in a moment, gave her much satisfaction; it pleased her to interview, so nonchalantly, the great men and women she had hitherto only read about.

There were always singers and musicians calling for their mail, or asking for the secretary, and she took great delight in hearing these people talk, or in studying the cut of their clothes.

One day a little woman, with small, round face and an old faded parasol in her hands, came tripping into the private office and over to Mr. Graveur's desk without waiting for an announcement.

"Hello, Louis," she said, in a high-pitched, piping voice.

Mr. Graveur looked up, in a surprised way, and then, as a look of recognition swept over his face, said: "Oh, hello, Rita."

"How about the contract?" she asked directly.

He hesitated. "Oh, well, Rita, I guess we'll have to wait until fall. I haven't heard from the other side yet, you know."

She shook her head knowingly. "You are a cute lot here. But, I'll see you later."

As the woman passed out, she said to the clerk at the little mail window—"Charlie, don't forget—The Élysée Palace—Paris, until November first."

Thatah was on the verge of asking who the little lady might be, when Graveur exclaimed: "That was Rita Pasale. She leads the ballet in Aida. She wants more money this year." And then, by way of explanation: "I knew her in Milan."

"She isn't the slave-girl, is she?" asked Thatah, remembering the slight girlish figure in the first formation of the ballet.

"Yes, the slave-girl, Thatah. She's married now to a fool in Italy. But she left him a year ago and brought her three children with her. Her eldest son is a cowboy in La Fanciulla del West."

"Why, she looks so childish on the stage."

"She's got a good soul. That keeps her young," Graveur answered, adding that the little dancer's body was nearer fifty than forty.

The days passed pleasantly for Thatah. Louis Graveur was an interesting man in many ways. She liked his soft, brownish hair turning grey over the temples, his kind, grey eyes, the olive-tinted skin. Even his movements, so gentle and quiet, seemed to be a component part of his appearance. They seemed to match up with his physical aspect, just as some stretch of landscape may be compared in tone to a bit of music.

He moved about quickly and always silently, yet there was something unusual and distinctive in the way he lit his cigarette or fingered a pencil on his desk. She also noticed a certain boyishness in his manner. Sometimes he would sit still for a long time, and then of a sudden, jump up and do what was his intent in a moment. But it was always done gracefully, and he would never upset things or crush the tenderest objects. He was the sort of big man who could carry a fly between his thumb and finger for half an hour and then set it free, unharmed.

Thatah, who had formerly come to feel that she must

forever bury as something beyond hope, her secret yearning for colorful things, found new interest in him.

One morning he told her about himself.

He had started out, intending to fit himself for an operatic career, but lack of money made him go through many hardships, and at last he was forced to give up. In Paris he was compelled to live amongst a group of other poverty-stricken students, and illness made work impossible; in Milan where he at last obtained an unimportant part, the company disbanded.

At twenty-seven he accepted a clerk's position in the business department of the Milan Opera, and from that time he had risen in this branch of the work until he had come to America to receive the office of Secretary.

"Often when I fall to wondering over my rather unexpected fate," he told her, "I find it difficult to relinquish my former desire for another life, or rather another career. When a tenor runs over the brilliant tints of an upper register, I find strange spasms in my throat. It makes me feel for a moment that I'll go back to it. Of course, it's too late now," he laughed.

That day, she came back from lunch a bit earlier than usual and found him sitting studiously at his desk, apparently not noticing her.

"You see how punctual I am," she said.

He looked up at her. In his eyes came an admiring smile.

"I wouldn't reprimand you if you were late," he replied. He thought for a moment. "Why, I haven't said a cross word to you in the months you've been here, have I?"

"Yes, you have."

"When?"

Thatah thought of a conversation in which he had told her of an expression she always wore on her face.

"When you said I was always sad-looking."

"Well, wasn't that the truth?" Then he went on more emphatically, "Why is it that you are always so — well, sad, isn't the word, it is more that you appear to wonder at things, Thatah."

"I do wonder at things," she replied. "But is that strange?"

"It's unusual — but you are unusual anyway, very unusual," he added, with a toss of his hand. "Do you know that?"

Thatah took off her jacket and hung it in the cloak-room. When she came back she asked him why he thought so.

"Oh, it's your little eccentricities; you're so erratic. Last week you were very kind to me. This week you are so superior. I dare not look at you."

Thatah drew her lips up a little haughtily.

"That's the way I want to be. God pity those who are so placed they can never do anything erratic."

For a time they busied themselves with indexing the subscription list. Then Graveur began to talk of the state of mind of the different artists.

"Some of them are so self-conscious," he said. "Now I've always been very self-conscious, nearly girlish indeed, but I don't believe that I've been conscious of my arms and legs or of the impression I made on my fellow-men. It's more that I have been conscious of my state of mind, or the impression I was making on God."

Before he went on he thought for a minute.

"Oh, when I come to think, I suppose if I were an artist I would be as bad as the rest of them. I remember once, when I was a little fellow, that I stopped my crying just because I suddenly discovered that my tears were running down from the outside corner of my eye instead of from the inside corner. And again, one day at about

my seventh year, when I was sick and very pale, I climbed into a chair and stood in front of the mirror on my mother's chiffonier, watching myself growing whiter and whiter until I dropped in a faint to the floor. Now, how's that for self-consciousness?"

"I think you might have made a very temperamental opera singer," was Thatah's reply, though, as she answered him, she thought how strange it was that he should so belittle himself before her. And she thought, too, of her father with his meek manner. There seemed a certain parallelism between these two men, though she could not quite name it.

After they had finished the work and he was putting back the files, Graveur turned to her, saying, as he studied her face: "You know, Thatah, you puzzle me more each day. I hardly know how to handle you."

This was really the first confession of a thought that had been bothering him for many weeks. He had discerned long before from the manner of their conversation that he could discuss with her, quite freely, almost any subject. And yet each time it was with some fear and trepidation that he would start to talk upon a subject that was a little unconventional. Though she would discuss freely with him any argument which he brought up, there was always a childishness and naïveté in her manner which he could not fathom.

One day he came across in print, a theory advanced by a well-known professor, that had to do with the importance of recognizing a state which the scholar called "Psychic Cohesiveness." He told Thatah about this and they spoke in a quite unembarrassed way about sex, as it concerned the theory.

Thatah was surprised at herself, but somehow she felt absolutely free and secure in the presence of this man and was only glad of the opportunity he gave her to

explain some of the views that had come from her persistent reading.

The conversation had gradually drifted into a discussion of the blind course that a woman of Graveur's acquaintance had taken, and Thatah startled him by the seriousness and depth of her views.

"A woman can give herself in only two ways," she told him. "She may do it out of the joy of life and not follow any special moral rule, or she may do it because she really cares.

"In either of these cases I can't see what the church or marriage has to do with it. Why should she ask the blessing of the church? It is not a question of right or wrong but only whether or not you act sincerely, and that you are doing no more harm to others, than is needful to get some good for yourself."

He knew her better after that. He found that beneath her long silences, her nearly perpetual sombreness, there was hidden an intense desire for life that was fairly primeval in its innocence.

He could not know the periods of self-searching and studying she had passed through in the last few months. Thatah herself felt she was immeasurably more wise and experienced than she had been only three months before. In this time she had observed the people about her, had looked into their lives, and compared them with her own.

Graveur grew fonder of her as the days passed and her frankness was her best protection. Her little rebellious talks against conventions and life, only brought to him a greater reverence for the confidence, really increasing her goodness in his eyes. Here was a woman, new to his experience; a woman who lived in the very midst of subterfuge and continental liaisons, who still did not, for an instant, lose any of the maiden shyness or charm that comes from purity of mind.

Once, in one of their unconventional talks, they turned to Schopenhauer and his regard for women. Thatah had read a little essay Graveur had given her just the day before.

"All the mean things he says are true, I suppose," said she.

"True?" he exclaimed.

She thought for a moment. "Except in one place, where he says women are horrid because they are too fat. I get him there, don't I? And he really is a way off when he says men are superior to women. He was probably an intelligent person and judged all men by himself, but I'm sure he judged women by only the women with whom he associated. And I guess *they* didn't know much. Intelligent men never run to intelligent women, do they?"

Graveur arose from his desk. "I believe you are becoming cynical, Thatah," he said, regarding her curiously.

"Well," she replied, smiling and answering his stare in a child-like way, "What if I am?" It seemed that she was tempting him, even daring him to discuss the usually dangerous subjects.

"Well, I don't want you to. You are too young for that."

"Are you saving me for something better?"

"I am," he replied. "And you will forget your ideas some day — after I have taught you my optimisms."

Thatah thought she discovered his hidden meaning and answered him in a surprisingly frank way.

"Mr. Graveur," said she, "I admire you and I like you and you are so kind to me. And yet, when you look at me so steadily, I somehow feel that you mean something that I — well, that I don't feel at all."

He laughed a little. "You are indeed frank, Thatah."

"Isn't that the way to be?" She looked up with wide open eyes.

The conversation ended by the man telling her, in somewhat breaking tones what an odd and strange little person she was.

Her relationship with this older man was the cause of much perplexity to Thatah. She realized that she could relieve herself of much misery and much real suffering if she would let herself find pleasure in being with him. But there was something more she wanted, though she could not explain it to herself.

It bothered her to think that she could not forget this, and many times, while she was sitting at the side of his desk, she would tell herself that she must be more sensible. And then Graveur would look at her in his kindly, affectionate way, and she would look down and blush and feel guilty because the old feeling of indifference would steal through her.

But the other side of her life had not changed much.

At the boarding house the days dragged by in monotonous recurrence. There was the same food, the same conversation, the same disdainful haughtiness written on the face of the poetess. And though Thatah felt that her lot was a little less trying since she had taken a position, still she was always harassed by a feeling of arid isolation that could not be overcome.

For a time she even thought her father a little less melancholic, a bit more buoyant and cheerful. But these spells would last for only a few days and then he would go back into his drab mood and be as sad as before.

In the early part of December, when it was dark at six o'clock, she never failed to find him sitting in front of the little soft coal stove, his head buried in his hands

and his eyes quite closed, so that he wasn't even conscious of her entrance.

He seemed changed in other ways, too. His words came softer, kinder, though as Thatah soon perceived, more replete with gloominess and analytical searching.

One night, she came in covered with snow from a storm that had lasted throughout the day, and found him shaking with emotion, as if in some wild dream.

He gave a start, as she entered, and his face became pale and blanched.

"What is it, father," she asked, thinking she had never seen him look so ill and aged.

He answered simply: "Ah, I've been reading, reading, Thatah." As he handed her a book he said, "I find a place where Faust says to Satan: 'Je veux un tresor qui les contient tous. Je veux la Jeunesse —'"

Then he quoted in English, "I desire a treasure that contains them all, I desire youth."

"Yes, Thatah," he went on. "It's youth — youth — and I haven't it. Oh, be careful, little girl, and don't waste the years the way I have wasted mine — on some one who doesn't care."

"You are thinking too seriously again, father," she interrupted, taking his trembling hands and burying her face in them.

He gently caressed her head, saying: "My girl, you are understanding more and more. I see it in you. And how glad I am. I want you to understand, I want you to know what there is in life. Oh, how wonderful it would be if you should grow into a woman who would not sell her feelings and understanding, because of the fear of passing time.

"Every life is a mirror, dear," he went on slowly, "and reflected impressions stay with us. Yes, we must watch what we give to ourselves."

As if he hesitated to word the thought that impelled him, he said: "I think I can tell you now, Thatah. I see that you have grown."

"What is it, father?"

He spent a long time in thought before answering her. Then as if it were an effort to convince himself of the truthfulness of his words, he told her that happiness only comes after one has disappointments to measure it by.

He went on, talking slowly and deliberately, as if he were telling the final result of long thinking, as if it were a document handed down as the complete result of a great problem.

"The men and women who think and act as they feel are the real aristocrats in this world. And their suffering, the suffering that comes because of isolation and cruel misunderstanding makes their persistence noble and glorious. Yes, Thatah we must seek, always seek, and never give up.

"Our work, our art, is only a bit of a holiday from the fruitless search. To yearn for something real, that you could feel in your very breath, against your lips and cheek, something, that if it were tangible and you could put it in the palm of your hand, you would know from its very convolutions to be happiness — ah, Thatah, that is the quest of life."

From downstairs came the clanging sounds of the dinner bell, and in a moment, a maid at the head of the stairs had announced, "Dinner, dinner —" but he kept on talking, and Thatah, thoroughly under the spell invoked by the unhappy man, felt each word pierce into her being.

Eman Revelly appeared to be consumed by the fire of his thoughts, for his eyes flashed with intensity, while his mouth, always so drawn and cold and lifeless, became

excited and virile — the lips drew apart, the teeth showed, he was a being in a state of exaltation.

"Sometimes," he said to her, in a voice that was a whisper, "I am throbbing all over. Yes, I get that way, and then I can dissect my soul nearly. And tear out my heart, and lay it out before me as if on a table, and then say, 'You see that place there?' Well, *there* is where I imagined I was happy — a long while ago — before I understood. And it was a joke . . . And that place? Ah, you see that place too, do you? Well, there — I thought was real sympathy and feeling. Yes, a long while ago — before I understood. And *it* was a joke.

"Yes, Thatah, I can do that sort of thing sometimes. And when I do, I gloat over it and become unhappier, and mock at my servitude to this throbbing thing called *Heart*.

"Yes, it is because I see what a devilish thing it is to love, and yearn — that they call me crazy, Thatah," he added, as if in an afterthought.

Thatah drew away from him. Her eyes were filled with tears. "Oh, father, you make me so unhappy talking this way," she cried.

He went on, not noticing. "Yes, to-day, at the orchestra they called me crazy. Heineman called me that — because I feel too much what I play. They say I should play like they do — like a union man — a brick-layer — and when the dinner bell rings I should drop my music, my soul, and go eat with them, some ham and cabbage."

When he quieted for a moment, Thatah suggested that it was a poor idea for him to tell them about his understanding and feeling. "They don't understand you, you know that," she said. "That is the reason you suf-

fer. Why don't you fool them and keep away from them what you feel and think. That is the reason that mother —"

He interrupted her quickly.

"Yes, your mother — well — she said I was crazy too, because she didn't understand me. No, Thatah," he continued somewhat bitterly, "I am sane, normal, I tell you. Only no one can know what I am going through."

Noticing that his face at that moment became more pale, she asked him what was wrong.

There was less strength in his voice as he said: "I have a continual feeling, Thatah, very odd, as if I were slipping. It's been with me a long while. And though I know it is only the state of my mind, yet I can't help it. I guess I haven't much left."

"Why, father, you shouldn't talk so. You have your wonderful music."

"Yes, perhaps I have. But one disassociates their life from their art. At least they should. In my life — well, it hasn't been one that ran along brilliant and glowing with flame."

"You feel too intensely, father. Your dreams are so high. No one could expect to reach them."

"My only dream was for happiness. And that is everybody's right."

"You were happy in Vienna, weren't you, father?" argued Thatah.

"Very," he smiled, reminiscently.

"Well, then, you ought to be happy here. I know you have a lot of friends in the orchestra, and other places."

Her father laughed a little strangely. "Thatah, listen. Here is a quotation from the great Nietzsche — he says: 'They all speak of me when they sit around

their fire in the evening — they speak of me, but no one thinketh of me.' Nietzsche knew the world well when he said that."

Immediately Thatah was aroused.

"In what book is that, father?" she asked.

"I am not sure. In 'Thus Spake Zarathustra,' I think."

"You read him, a good deal?"

"He is my religion. Why, child?"

"Oh, I thought he only made people happy."

"Ah, happy. Nietzsche saw the impossibility of that."

"But wasn't he happy, with his own philosophy?" she asked.

"He was happy, my dear, in his disillusionment."

Revelly arose now and with much effort went to the bookcase, and took out a book that contained on its front cover, a picture of the author they had been discussing.

"I don't think that Nietzsche was an unhappy man," he said, as he handed the book to Thatah. "And still when you study his face you see it lined by sorrow. It was because his mind had used his face as a waste tablet, there to trace its struggles, its doubts, its passions." The professor paused. "He found happiness in knowing that his message was new.

"After all, no matter how ignorant or intelligent a person is, their happiness depends upon having something that fills their life so completely it blots out everything else. I remember a German student friend of mine in the old Vienna days. His whole life was centred in a certain pride he took in himself because he, of all his neighbors and friends, knew that to walk any great distance without fatigue, one must walk with the knees bent. And he was an interesting sight, stalking about the streets, his knees bent, and a benignant smile covering

his face, as if he, of all the world's inhabitants, knew how to walk. This bit of illusion filled his life and kept him happy.

"In Nietzsche's case, the man was obsessed by an idea wrought from his intelligence, and he was so wrapped up in the happiness of having it, that, I am sure, he had no time to realize its sadness."

Thatah suddenly perceived another aspect to his story.

"Then why aren't you that way, father?" she questioned.

"I haven't anything to fool me. That is the reason," he answered. "I am starving mentally. And I can't help realizing it."

Only after many minutes of begging, could Thatah persuade him to turn from his soul-searching mood. But she did succeed, and when they entered the dining-room, she was surprised to see him strangely gay and light-hearted, and to hear him greet each of the boarders with a separate courteous phrase.

They had for supper that night, what Mrs. Neer called blue-fish.

"You care for blue-fish, professor?" asked some one at the table as he seated himself.

"Yes," he answered, "and I fancy that this one's blueness brought him into even greater tragedy."

Mrs. Neer at the end of the table looked up at his vague remark, and scenting some slur in his speech, she frowned. "You mean it isn't good, Herr professor?" — she always used "Herr" when in temper.

"Oh," he answered, looking around nervously, "I meant simply to say that this fish had some physical disorder, even more than is shown by his mental state. I should say he was one of those unfortunate creatures that never attracted the attention of other fishes and so grew tough and shrivelled up."

A distinct murmur passed around the table, as Revelly went on eating. In that moment even, though Thatah was conscious of the disapproval shown by the other lodgers, she offered up a little prayer of thankfulness that his spirit was lighter again and his mood bantering and playful. It had been a long while since she had seen him this way.

Then Mr. Samuel, the young man sitting at the side of Thatah, discoursed on a medical subject — *the crenated red blood cell*. "It's this cell that causes all the mischief in pale, anemic women," he began. "My company regard 'Erythrohydrate' the new drug they are putting on the market, as a sure cure for this condition." While everyone watched, he traced with his fork a little ragged outline on the table-cloth, showing the appearance of the crenated cell, and entered into a discussion concerning it, which confused very much, the middle-aged poetess. He talked about the women who clung to their maiden modesty with the unceasing efforts of a martyr.

"Why, that's the trouble with these pale young girls you see all the time," he said, going on to describe an article which told that seventy per cent. of the trouble that bothered women was due to a change in the red blood corpuscles.

"Our manager is going to quote that article. I tell you it'll bring in the letters of inquiry from the back woods."

He was exultant and happy in the thought that all were listening to the marvellous words he had only that afternoon memorized from their pamphlet.

Suddenly he was interrupted by Mrs. Cortello.

"Don't you think, Mr. Samuels, we had better not discuss medical subjects at the meal hour?"

The boy blushed maiden-like. "Why, I was only ex-

plaining to Miss — to Professor Revelly's daughter, the reason —"

He stopped short, embarrassed to find the different meaning he had taken of their silence. "I'm sorry," he said, and buried himself in another helping of potatoes. . . .

As time went on, Thatah went more resignedly to each meal, though they never ceased to be ordeals. It tore her heart nearly to smile inanely at some remark, or laughingly acquiesce with their judgment.

"Yes, I quite agree with you," she would always say, finding it the better method to agree; though no sooner would she reach her room, than her hypocrisy would slap her in the face. Often she wished that something would happen to keep her from ever again being compelled to talk to these people.

As the winter passed, Thatah, looking back over the months, fancied that she had aged years. It may have been her new independence and resourcefulness that caused this, for now she found herself relying nearly entirely upon her own convictions, and did without any self-questioning whatever seemed in her own eyes to be right.

Her greatest diversion was found about the opera house. Sometimes, in the late afternoon, when her work was finished, she would wander out into the auditorium and from some seat in the balconies, would look upon the heavy steel curtain that separated her from the mystic world that lay behind. And then her mind would dwell upon the lives of the people who nightly sang and lost themselves in the glory of their art. She would compare their existence to her own. "How wonderful it must be," she would often say to herself.

She would think of how these people must feel with

their names leading the columns of the newspapers. She said as much, one matinée day, when she was talking with a leading singer.

"Oh, you don't know," the woman answered; "you don't think of the hard work, the years over in Europe, and the struggles."

"But all that is paid for by your success," Thatah argued.

"Well," said the singer, "I am thirty-eight now, and all I have to show for it is lonesomeness in my room at the hotel. The only thing to do is to marry when you are young—and watch the others be ambitious. Oh, one can't do both."

Thatah felt she was sincere. "Surely you couldn't be happy, and talk like that," she thought to herself. Yet, somehow, the fascination of what lay back of that steel curtain never left her.

Spring came, and Thatah found that eight months had passed since the first day she started in the small back office of the opera. She looked at herself one evening in the mirror of a weighing machine at the Grand Central Station, wondering if she had changed. And it was with a prideful chuckle that she admitted herself even more attractive.

She had learned to wear a low-necked shirt-waist, and over it a little piece of point lace that Mlle. Frenaud, a singer, had given her, and as she was viewing herself in the narrow chewing-gum mirror, her neck looked rather soft and well molded. It pleased her so much that when she got into the subway train, she walked more gaily down the aisle. "As nice as Hagar's," she reflected.

Though the days brought her some satisfaction, the nights at home were always the same; always the usual dreary, deadening conversation in the front parlor, or

else a mood of her father which made her morbid and restless.

The monotony and mediocrity of the cheap boarding place was galling to her after a day spent amongst her congenial surroundings at the opera. And each day found her resistance growing less and less.

Once she wondered if they could not get out of their rut by going to some other better place. But when she mentioned this to her father, there was a scene, and he told her that he was not yet out of debt from the past winter, and that they must guard against the dulness of the four summer months, when the orchestra was paid no salary, and when he might not be able to procure a summer position.

"We must be glad we are alive, my child," he said in the end.

Those words grew in their proportions for Thatah. Exactly why should she be glad she was alive, if her life held no change in it? And a few days later, when both were given positions for the coming summer, she as a companion in a home in the White Mountains, and Revelly with an orchestra in Milwaukee, she was even more unhappy. The sick woman with whom the position had been obtained, offered very little in the way of pleasant diversion.

One evening after the matinée she walked all the way to One Hundred and Forty-third Street, and all she did was to ask herself the question: "Why should I be glad?" She asked it again and again, almost fiercely.

However, through Graveur's kindness she obtained many diversions, which helped greatly to keep her from being too miserable.

Noticing that it pleased her to wander about in the atmosphere of celebrities, he called her into the inner office one day. She was aware of his intentions as soon

as she entered the room, for only a few minutes before she had admitted in to Mr. Graveur's presence one of the greatest pianists in the world.

"Miss Revelly, Herr Voitner has expressed a desire to meet you. I have explained to him how fond you are of music."

The big man arose at Graveur's words and held out his hand to Thatah. "You must come to my concert to-night in Carnegie Hall, Miss Revelly," he said, in fairly good English.

And that night she enjoyed her first piano recital by a great artist. Her understanding of music and of the performer seemed to grow with each note. He had such a concise, well defined manner at the piano. His attitude from the very first moment spoke of mastery, and when later in the evening, he played through the intricate unkind movements of a Beethoven sonata, he seemed to have risen above all technical obstacles. Like a giant woodman abroad in some gnarled forest of massive oaks, he attacked the unresponsive passages, assailing with vigor their apparent resistance, throwing himself upon his work with an intensity that brought out the individual proportions of every measure.

It was a wonderful interpretation of the masterpiece, and Thatah sat enwrapped in a trance-like appreciation.

With nobility and exaltation he played the grandiose opening bars, and yet when the andante movement arrived, there was a subtle ecstasy, a lambent coloring and expressiveness about his tones that took away all his apparent strength and made of him a gentle shepherd, aloof in the field with his flocks, or a young girl wandering through the shady lanes, gently chirping back the spring melodies that came to her ears.

Thatah never realized until now what a manly art was this, where for perfection, there must at once be combined

the virility of intelligent manhood with the tenderness and charm of the complete woman. . . .

It also pleased her immeasurably to watch the rehearsals. The soldiers marching to mock battle, the turmoil of shifting scenes, the pleading cries of the different orchestra leaders—all this interested her greatly.

One day Mr. Graveur joined her while she was sitting in the front row of the upper balcony. A long streaking light from one of the side windows pointed out to him, her shadowy form, as he came along in the darkness of the auditorium.

“How are they doing?” he asked, as he came up.

“Hush! It’s beautiful,” she whispered.

It was the second act of “*Butterfly*” and their last rehearsal. Everything was in its place, the little cherry blossom scenery, the artificial atmosphere shimmering in its golden haze.

The delicate glory of it affected Thatah, and she sat motionless, and entranced, her hands clasped about her knees.

“Hedwig is in wonderful voice, again, isn’t he?” Graveur remarked, after a time.

“Wonderful,” she murmured.

Suzuki and Cho-Cho-San were behind the holes in the rice-paper *Shosi*. The cannon had long ago told of the warship’s arrival, and the charming music, so crooning, so well shaded, with its wan, subtle nuance, came up from the orchestra and enveloped them.

Then Graveur suddenly exclaimed “Thatah, I wonder if you ever think what all of this means?”

She turned around, her glance full of surprise. Enwrapped in the picture on the stage, she had become unaware of his presence.

Without a word she looked back to the stage, while he

went on, speaking slowly and softly. His dark eyes were shaded by his hands, and as he talked he looked down onto the stage rather than at her. He seemed to realize Thatah's thoughts were full of the impression wrought by the music.

"I mean that this sort of thing gives me something to think about. The music, the tragedy of Cho-Cho-San — all of it, so human, so frail, so inevitable. Do you ever stop and think of the lives of these people on the stage?"

"I think often," she answered in a whisper.

"But most people never look back of it, or at the end of it; on one side the yearning, embittering fight when they are young — on the other, the end, where the voice fails, and they get too old to convince their audiences.

"No, I think people go to the opera like passengers ride on a train, never thinking what is back of the singing any more than the passenger considers the engineer or fireman.

"But they've got to go on just the same, child," he added, returning to his original idea. "Why, sometimes, you can't imagine how affected I become by all this glamour. I come out here and hear some one in the gallery cry his 'Bravo' — or listen to the enthusiastic applause in the boxes — and I feel that it is too unhappy a subject to even think about. It's because I know what it all leads to. Unless they are at the top, and we heed them, even after their voices have failed, half of these people now singing for us find their places soon taken by some younger, fresher voice. Then where do they go? They begin pleading with the management, the directors — and if they haven't protected themselves in a financial way, they find it is all past with them. And they may have sacrificed everything else in life for their ambition."

"Age is a rotten thing, isn't it?" said Thatah, as she looked up. "But I believe you are a little blue to-day."

He smiled faintly. "No, I am really not, child. Just reminiscent, and thinking about myself."

"You should be strong, though, and not talk so," Thatah said, her big eyes filled with an expression of pity.

"One cannot help thinking sometimes."

"About what?"

"Oh, age —"

"Which is very bad for one, dear man — yet age could be beautiful," she added as an afterthought, "if it brought much to us."

"Most often we only become older. That is about all there is to it." He arose from his seat. "This is one of my bad days, I guess," he said, ready to make his way off in the darkness.

Down on the stage, the voices were blending for the finale. Butterfly had pierced herself with her father's inscription-covered sword; the orchestra's wailing lamentation was crowning the pathetic story. Soon the curtain descended.

"I'll go with you," said Thatah.

When they reached the office she said directly: "Why are you so strange? You confide in me and let me know all your weaknesses." She gave an odd little toss of her head, and even gently touched his arm, "And you are so important and dignified with everyone else. Why are you this way with me?"

Graveur took her hand and held it tightly between his own. "Because I like you, Thatah. It is only not quite right, because you are not fond of me. But an old man like me shouldn't ask that, I suppose."

"I am very fond of you, Mr. Graveur."

"Not fond enough —"

Thatah suddenly became rather serious. "I wish you wouldn't say such things," she said. "You make it so

hard for me. I *am* fond of you. But I am too insignificant in the make-up of things to deserve your caring for me. And then I am so selfish, so terribly selfish, and that is the trouble. I want something — that I can't describe. It is something greater, something more powerful than what I feel with you." She turned away from him and her voice became more wistful. "Yes, that's what worries me — worries me all the time. You are so kind, so gracious, but I don't feel for you what I want to feel. That's it. And I couldn't make myself try, because then I would be lying to both of us. Oh, you do understand, don't you?"

He smiled a little gravely as he listened to her words.

"You're queer, so queer, little Thatah."

"I know it," she replied directly. "Yet I'm willing to keep on going through so many miserable things, just for the end." For an instant she seemed intensely interested, then said decisively:

"I'll tell you why it is. It's because there doesn't seem anything else worth living for but just that thing, whatever it is, that it is worth while having at the end."

"Ah, you are wrong, Thatah. You will learn differently some day. You are young now and you dare anything. But you will find that this love thing that everyone talks so much about, is only a phantom, a grotesque, turgid fancy, that fools every one at least once and then makes them bitter for life. I believe there is only one kind of relationship. It is where there is regard in the place of yearning, sacrifice in the place of craving.

"I mean friendship," he emphasized. "It's friendship that is the biggest thing in life. Why it is much more difficult than love. And it is greater too, because in friendship you *give* instead of *get*. And it is more wonderful than love, because it is more fragile. Love you can pull asunder, slap it and tear it to pieces and yet feel

that you have it still with you. But I'll tell you the truth. You think you have it because in reality you never have it; it is like other intangible, mystical things — like anything which is a product of the imagination.

"But friendship is so different. It is a thing that you can even see, feel — because it is built on real material, because you have created it. It is glorious because it is something that gives constant pleasure, because it is so sure and quieting, and never a bit crazy like this thing they call love."

While Thatah was held fascinated by his odd, wonderful manner of talking he told her of a case in the opera, where a leading soprano had met a man in Paris, and after a few days, had married him.

"The man loved life for what he took out of it," continued Graveur, "and when he met this woman, he pictured in her, a gifted, beautiful companion for his restaurant and boulevard day. And she pictured him as a loving companion who would comfort her and lift her out of her lonesomeness. They married — deeply in love, and I remember, were very hysterical about it.

"And now, after only three months, these people are living their lonely lives again, separated from each other, and she is getting a divorce with his consent. Why? Well, because they married for love, selfishness. She wanted him to be her companion and get out of him what she had pictured, and he wanted to get out of her what he had pictured. They wanted different things, but they wanted to get those things out of the other. She was domestic and retiring while he was gay. But they were both selfish, they wanted to get instead of give to each other. Now, just because they can't get out of each other exactly what they had planned, they are separated. Yet they called it love."

The talk that afternoon aroused Thatah more than any

other conversation they had ever had together. He had so unfolded himself and had made himself so sincere and kindly that she was more affected by him than ever before.

That night she sat in her little room, thinking, recapitulating. A dozen times she nearly decided that it would be wonderful to live with this quiet, passive man.

She wondered why it was she couldn't feel in the right way for him. It was so nice to talk to him, to hear his soft words. Yet the moment he touched her, something in her being seemed to demand release. It was strange, inexplicable.

"Oh, if I only knew what it was I really wanted," she begged of herself.

From that time she began to study her own desires more.

Often she looked through the little grated window of the ticket office onto the crowd of gaily laughing girls, quite her age, who came through the lobby decked in their magnificent gowns. It would end in her being overwhelmed by her own realizations. She would say to herself: "*They* don't understand, *they* don't know. But look how happy they are."

Once her little rebellion ended by her going back into the cloak room and in purposeless fashion fiercely scrubbing her hands. She didn't know why she should scrub her hands at that moment, other than that she must do something to distract her attention. And she murmured a half dozen times to the bare walls, "They don't understand, they don't understand."

Thatah was no longer tranquil and resigned these days. Like the hunter in the forest who watches the horizon for the rising sun to guide him, she kept seeking in the distance for understanding and the fulfilment of her ambition.

At times she believed that it would never be different

for her, and once, when she was very tired, she was on the point of deciding that she must estrange all of her yearnings and beliefs. However, at the end, she stayed close to her resolutions, and her belief that the ideal realization was something that came through the emotions, real and unconfined, never forsook her. She forgot all other arguments, forgot the chance of years slipping by, or the futility of her quest. She was only sure that she could never give up to circumstances. There were days when she was aware that the future might bring anguish, disappointment, sorrow. But if she tried to be more normal, and went out with people, and listened to their inane conversation, and observed their petty demands of life, she came home always terribly bored, and feeling that she was surely right in wanting something more of life.

One evening, in early December, everything was so monotonous she finally gave in to young Mr. Samuel's wish that she accompany him to a theatre.

That night, however, just as they were leaving, her father had a sinking spell and they all stood around the bed until two o'clock in the morning.

After that Thatah never left him in the evening.

CHAPTER XII

HAGAR continued along the path of her new life with an ever-increasing interest.

There was much to occupy her mind.

Little by little, Greenfield made her understand that he was deeply interested in her, in one way or another exerting himself to please her.

When the cold, sadder days in November came on, he arranged for her purchase of a little fur collarette on an instalment basis and one day, when a sudden sleet storm had come on, he sent down to her an umbrella.

In response to a message from him one evening, Hagar went up to his office after the store was closed. It was well past six, and two others ahead of her made it nearly seven before she was able to see him.

But she waited patiently and when he shook hands with her and asked her to sit down for a moment, while he straightened out an affair that was worrying him, she was inwardly pleased, and rather happy at the thought that he should want to get everything finished before he dealt with her. She sat quietly at the side of his desk, noticing his pink, well-groomed nails, the careful appearance of his shoes and their up-to-date shape, his well-creased grey trousers. Sitting there, she recollected how different Herrick's hand-clasp was from this man's. When Mr. Greenfield took her hand, he was not rough, but gentle, and did not squeeze her hand till it hurt. Mr. Greenfield gave only the faintest pressure.

"I wanted you to stop in, Miss Revelly," the manager began, "as I have some really good news for you. We

have decided to create the position of guide in this store. By this we mean some person, some young lady, who will be well dressed and who will show our country trade, all the different departments. It will be up to you — yes, I have selected you — to gain a knowledge of all the different features, like the babies' checking room on the third floor, or the lounging room for people who are tired or ill and want to recline."

He went on in a measured voice: "This position has been given to you, of course through my direction, and I am awfully glad to see you have it."

A kindly smile lined his face as he looked up. "I suppose you have no objections?"

"Why, I — I am so pleased, Mr. Greenfield, I hardly know what to say," she faltered.

He noticed how bewildered she had become. An expression — half shrewd, half pitying, stole across his face. Then he resumed his former, businesslike tone.

"The salary is twelve dollars a week, Miss Revelly, and will start on the coming Monday. You will be ready?"

"Oh, of course," she replied, eagerly.

He went on to tell her a few more things about the position. "You'll have to wear a black silk dress of good quality, like the models in the cloak department. Only be sure to put in some small piece of white lace about the collar and cuffs."

Hagar's face changed expression at this remark, and divining her thoughts, he told her that if she hadn't the money to get this dress at present, she should go into the dressmaking department and order it, and have Mrs. Wheeler, the head-lady, call him up over the telephone.

Hagar volunteered the suggestion that she pay a few dollars down each week, but he laughed very cordially and said: "I'll fix that end of it all right."

"But I don't think it's right," she insisted.

He gently patted her hands. "You mustn't worry about that."

Taking up her little black leather purse she arose just as he was looking at his watch. It had become quite dark by this time and the distant tramping of the janitor as he shut the heavy fireproof doors between each section of the store, resounded throughout the building.

"Pshaw," he exclaimed, "I didn't know I was keeping you so late, Miss Revelly. I'm sorry. Where do you live?"

His manner was sincere and she told him without a thought.

Then he looked at his watch again, and seemed to be undecided, starting to propose something, then hesitating, and at last, as if arguing with himself, saying: "Well, it doesn't make any difference with me as I eat down town anyway, but I hate to think about you going home alone, Miss Revelly. I'll tell you what"—the idea appeared to please him immensely—"we'll just drop in some place and get a bite and I'll put you in a taxi. It's all my fault."

To Hagar this seemed the greatest goodness. That this important man should inconvenience himself for her, seemed too much to accept without some protestation.

She exclaimed: "Oh, no, Mr. Greenfield, I couldn't think of it. You've been so good already and really, I don't mind going home alone. I only live two blocks from the subway."

But Greenfield had on his hat and coat. "I couldn't allow you to go alone," he said authoritatively; "it is a good thing I thought of it."

His words were so firmly and decisively spoken Hagar offered no more resistance, but fell in quietly with his plans.

Going down the elevator with him, she was conscious of a certain pride and as she passed the counter where she had worked all afternoon she had a queer little feeling of exultation. She was no longer a saleslady.

In the street, they could not decide where to dine and at last, after perceiving that Hagar knew nothing at all about the restaurant life in New York, Greenfield mentioned the name of an Italian restaurant on Twenty-fifth Street.

"It's a quiet place and you'll like it," he told her with enthusiasm. "They have great music there, too. Do you care for music?"

"Oh, I like it some, but I get tired of hearing too much of it. My father," she faltered somewhat, "was a musician."

"It's funny you didn't take it up then," he suggested.

"Oh, we got so tired hearing it. We had too much of it, I guess."

As they walked along it seemed to Hagar that his attention was not at all upon their little jaunt, for he walked along silently, and every few steps turned around to look up the street.

"It's pretty rough over here on Sixth Avenue, about this time of night," he said, becoming aware that she was observing him. "So if you see anything that isn't just right, shut your eyes."

A little further on they turned into a side street and then went up the steps of an old brick building where the sign — J. GALOZZO — swung out alluringly over their heads.

"You'll like it here a lot," he said. "There seems to be a lot more people here than usual, but I guess you don't mind it's being noisy, do you?"

"Oh, no," she answered.

Her eyes swept past the rows of white tables onto the

blue-coated musicians who were playing on a raised platform in the middle of the room. And when he stood off to arrange for a table, she thought how solicitous and protecting he was, and how sadly Mr. Herrick, who was always thirsting for adventure, fell away by comparison. She remembered how the boy had wanted her to go "slumming" the very first night they were together. "I'll show you all kinds of things you never saw or heard of before," he had pleaded, and was angry with her when she hesitated. This man was so good, so fatherly, so gentle with her.

They had a very nice dinner, with a great many courses, and out of a long bottle Greenfield poured a thin, red wine. He asked Hagar if she would have some on a lump of sugar.

"I never drink anything," she asserted.

"I'm glad to hear that," said he instantly. "I don't think girls your age ought to even think of it, though many of them do. At least, they shouldn't drink in these public places."

However, he drank part of his glass of wine, and appeared to like it. When the dinner was over, he ordered an amber colored liquor, which he said was Benedictine. "It isn't intoxicating at all," he told her. "You can drink that all right."

Hagar liked the place and its joviality immensely. Their table was in a sort of trellised alcove, and was away from the crowd. The gauzy red shades over the table lights threw a soft, warm glow on their faces, and matched up with the sentimental, languorous music of the orchestra, while the liquor made her feel warm and restful. As she looked across the table to Greenfield, she showed that she was happy and pleased.

Greenfield was playing with two lumps of sugar, which he had marked with black dots.

"I'll match you," he said, "to see whether you go right home or stay and listen to the music for another half hour."

"Why, I'll be glad to stay," she protested.

Since she felt that way, it seemed to her useless to put the question to chance, but he insisted and she took the little cakes of sugar and shook them in her hand in the manner he showed her.

She threw ten, and he told her she'd won, adding: "It's no use for me to throw. I never could beat that. I guess we'll have to stay."

Hagar shook the little dice again. "Isn't that great fun!" she cried, as they rolled between the plates on the table.

"That's what they call dice — it's a gambling game, if you play it right."

"With lumps of sugar like that?" She was much interested. "Oh, show me," she begged.

Greenfield explained to her the rules of the game and the material out of which dice were made. "But, it's a man's game and little girls must not know about it," he went on. As he spoke, he dropped the little cakes into his wine glass. "Some people's money melts away just like that when they play," he added.

At that moment, a stout Italian lady, in a fine, full-bodied Broadway accent, began singing a popular melody. When she reached the chorus, everyone joined in, whistling or singing.

"They have a pretty good time here, don't they?" Greenfield asked.

"I should say," she answered, with her eyes beaming.

Presently Hagar observed a couple across the room. The man looked to be older than Mr. Greenfield, about forty-five, she thought, and wore a red tie with a big,

sparkling pin in it. The girl with him was about her own age.

For a long time Hagar sat silently observing them, then her interest became more aroused when she saw the girl search for her handkerchief, and lift it to her eyes.

"I wonder what is the matter with them," Hagar exclaimed, pointing out the pair to Greenfield.

"Oh, I guess they're lovers." Greenfield gave a sly wink to the waiter, who at that moment was presenting the bill.

"I'll bet something has happened at home, and that they are just coming here to try and drown their sorrow."

The waiter brought back the change, and she saw Greenfield slip a half dollar piece to him. Apparently he tried to do it so that she could not see the money, but the coin slipped from his hand just as he was pushing it under a plate.

They were seated in the taxi, when she said rather sadly: "You spend a lot of money on me, Mr. Greenfield. I don't quite know how to thank you."

"Oh, that's nothing."

There was a smile on Greenfield's face and an expression in his voice that said he would like to spend a great deal more.

"Some day we will go to a really decent place and get a square meal," he told her.

They were at her front door in what seemed to Hagar a surprisingly short time. Greenfield took the key from her and turned the lock, but he skipped back into the cab before she had a chance to say a word of the little speech composed to thank him.

All he said was, as he rushed down the steps: "Take care of yourself, little girl."

Until the flickering lamp at the back of the automobile

disappeared into the night, she stood in the front vestibule, thinking what a nice man he was.

Then she went upstairs to her room. So early in the evening sleep was an impossibility, and she busied herself with putting back the ribbons into some newly returned laundry and then arranging it in the drawers of the dresser, the clean linen in one drawer and the little oddments, like bits of lace, a pair of white linen cuffs, and some handkerchiefs, in another. In her mind buzzed continually the fragments of the Italian lady's ragtime song, mingled with thoughts of Greenfield and his kindness to her.

She was still sitting on the edge of the bed, thinking in a peaceful kind of reverie, when she heard a knock on the door. It came so suddenly, she was a good deal frightened.

"Who's there?" she called.

"It's me, Queolla LaMotte."

It was the chorus lady who lived in the big front room on the floor above.

"Golly, Miss Revelly," she exclaimed. "What are you doing up so late? It's nearly two o'clock."

"Why, I didn't know it was so late." Hagar pushed out a rocker to the girl. "Oh, won't you sit down?"

"Sure, but I'll just stay a minute. I saw your light burning and I didn't know but what you were sick or something. You're always in bed, or rather it's always dark in here when I come home."

She placed on the white cover a great bouquet of roses, saying: "I've certainly had a funny time to-night. Yes, I've had a funny time."

In vivid fashion she told how she had arranged with the chauffeur of the taxi that he should give her a free ride some night.

"All I had to do was to run up a big fare. And I

certainly did. I kept him going for hours after we left the Lafayette. It cost my rich friend exactly eleven dollars and seventy cents. I saw the metre."

Turning to her purse she took out a cigarette. "It's a free ride next Sunday," she explained between puffs, "or I'll know why. We can go together if you want to."

For a time the girl continued smoking, taking deep inhalations and then blowing the smoke in a fine stream across the yellow flame from the gas jet.

There was a moment of meditation, accompanied by a wrinkling of her brows. Then she began again.

"Say, Miss Revelly, I've been watching you. You're too quiet and sort of sad. What's the matter? I was going to ask you the other day, then I told myself it was none of my business, and so I let you alone. 'Don't butt into her affairs,' I said to myself. 'Supposing she has got her troubles.' But now that we're together, maybe you can tell me?"

She leaned over, saying in a whisper, "I believe you're hanging around that old maid Gillespie too much. You leave her alone. You don't know her the way I do. Why she gets on the worst periodicals, you can't imagine."

"Why, I don't know what you mean!"

"I mean she gets drunk, soused — about every three months. She drinks like a fish. They last for two or three days at a time, too. Oh, we all know about it. If you're here long enough you'll see."

In Miss Gillespie, Hagar had found her only real woman friend. Night after night they had sat together, the older woman showing her how to mend her clothes, darn her stockings. More like a mother had been this good woman.

Hagar could not believe the girl's rash statement. But she controlled herself. She had learned the value of

silence, and only choked the words that came into her mouth.

The chorus girl went on: "Yes, you're too quiet. You don't go out enough. Why, you're a fool, a beauty like you. I wish I had your looks." The pencilled brows drew together. "Yes, I could do a lot, with a face like yours."

Half to herself, Miss LaMotte continued, "They're all next to me. I haven't got the innocent stare, you know."

Hagar moved nervously into a chair near the window.

Observing Hagar's restlessness, the chorus girl said: "You certainly are nervous, aren't you? But maybe you want me to go."

"Oh, no, please go on," Hagar answered, trying to hide her weariness.

"Well, what was I going to say? Oh, yes —" Now came a rapid fire argument against being good. "You're a fool. But you'll come around. I was that way before I got wise — used to buy silk stockings, and starve on eighteen per week — before I got on to the ropes. Yes, I had a hard time of it, too." There was a sigh of reminiscence in her voice.

"Then I met — him; the fellow I'm telling you about. And I've stuck to him for two years now." She yawned. "But I'm getting tired of him, though he is a perfect cinch. He's in the brokerage business, afraid he's getting old too quick — wants me to prove it to him. But I am getting pretty tired of my job.

"Why, he's beginning to make love, real love to me. Now what do you know about that, after two years?" She made a gesture of disgust by drawing up her lip and nose. "He's so funny. I came near laughing in his face to-night. He told me how he'd lost his wife and how they never had any children, and now she lives in his memory.

Why I tell you he's a perfect fool, my dear. He says that he has discovered all of a sudden, that I look like her. She must have been a peach."

"I should think that would please you," Hagar interrupted.

"Oh, no, I'm all past that stage. I get so tired of it. Sometimes, you wouldn't believe how I feel. Why, I'd give anything on earth to know I was going to have a date with some fellow I wanted—you know what I mean—some fellow that would drive me crazy nearly when he'd just put his arms around me and kiss me. But I guess I've got to keep on seeing this guy. He's got the money."

Noticing the passing of time, the girl became confidential, talking in nearly a whisper, so that Miss Gillespie in the next room, would not hear. And Hagar listened. The words came to her like some distant, far-away echo, the echo to her own troubled thoughts.

She began to feel that something buried in her was taking form. At the store, she had heard the girls talk of strange subjects, veiled and clothed by mystery, had seen them happy and sad over this great thing that seemed on every lip, and she had wondered why it was that she could not learn of life in the way the rest learned.

The impenetrable depths of understanding deep down in her were beginning to take on life.

Listening to the frank open conversation, with her eyes wide open and her lips apart, she found strange thoughts being worded, new impulses becoming impregnated within her.

Hagar's first question of Miss LaMotte came strangely easy, even though she was nervous and shaky. "Tell me, Miss LaMotte do you—do you live—with this man, and does he give you things, like money and clothes?" she asked.

The girl viewed her curiously, murmuring, "Well, I will — are you fooling? Or are you just —"

Hagar went over to her and put her hand on the girl's arm. "I just want to know, Miss LaMotte," she said, rather frightened at the look that had come into the girl's eyes. "Really, I don't know anything about those things."

"You don't know?"

"No, honestly —"

"Well, I will —"

"Please."

The other soon came to understand Hagar's utter innocence.

"I wouldn't have believed it," Queolla said, over and over again.

Hagar explained further. "I'm really not fooling. I just want to know. Everybody talks about it so much, all the girls at the store seem to think of nothing else, and I just have to listen and keep my mouth shut for fear they'll find out how little I know. Please tell me."

Then, the girl believed her, and told her a dozen little episodes, some frankly avowing her wrong, others more light in nature, which told of narrow escapes with really common men, who covered up their meanness by good clothes. She told one story of a deep regret, of a long continued game with a good man who loved her, saying unconsciously, "I made my mistake then."

They talked on, Hagar eager and frightened, Queolla proud and happy because she had found someone who would listen and yet not disbelieve her.

Before she left, she asked Hagar some questions in turn.

"How old are you, dear?"

Hagar answered that she was past sixteen.

The girl exclaimed: "And you don't go out, just stay in this room all the time? Why, it's a wonder you don't

go crazy. Yes, you will go crazy if you keep it up. But you leave it to me." As she went out, she whispered: "I wouldn't have believed it. I thought you had some affair, some real love affair, and I just let you alone. That's the reason I thought you were standing it. I thought maybe you were blue about some fellow.

"Why," she hesitated, "once I came near making you tell me, because I thought you were in trouble. You know what I mean, and that I could help you out. And you only stood it all this time because — because you didn't know! I wouldn't have believed it, dear!"

The faint light of dawn was coming through the green window shades when Miss LaMotte left and Hagar turned out the gas and tumbled into bed.

At breakfast Miss Gillespie said to Hagar, in a questioning manner:

"What are those circles doing under your eyes, Hagar?"

Then Miss Gillespie called her into the hall and said in a quiet, kind way, "Don't think I want to interfere, child, but I heard you and Miss LaMotte until early this morning and I'm not going to let you forget the couple of things that I've taught you. I want you to know that she is a fool who is surely going to get burned some day for playing with the flame."

Then she walked away, leaving Hagar leaning against the wall motionless with surprise.

At the store that day business was rather quiet, and at noon Hagar felt so worried and restless, she took advantage of the lunch hour to go up to her mother's house, and tell her of the new position.

On the following Monday Hagar was initiated into the requirements of her new occupation, and by the middle of the week she felt quite at home.

The work was not arduous, and there were hours at a

time when she had nothing at all to do. This, however, did not trouble her — she was not over-industrious — while her vanity gloried in the promotion, she felt herself in quite a different class from the ordinary sales-girl, and before she had been in her new position a month, she could swing past her old place at the shirt-waist counter in department “D” without even being conscious that she had once worked back of the piles of boxes and muslins.

CHAPTER XIII

HAGAR's new position made it necessary for her to see Benjamin Greenfield more often than before. And she understood quite well now that he was fond of her.

During this period they had many delightful suppers together. They never, however, went to the theatre.

One night, when he was on the point of taking her to a musical show, he had suddenly stopped and explained to her quite frankly that it wasn't a good idea for them to be seen together publicly. He told her they might very easily in this manner run into someone from the store.

"I know that I don't have to ask you whether you understand," he said.

"Of course, I understand, Mr. Greenfield," she told him in reply, thinking more of him for being so careful about his business.

Often Hagar wondered why she saw so little of Herrick now, though she did remember that she had not been able to treat him as nicely as she wished, since Mr. Greenfield had been taking her around.

As the days went by she began to have a certain insight, a really intelligent understanding, of the great city and its mingled vices; this monstrous pool where only money was a protection against inundation. She began to understand people by the color of their skin or the look in their eyes, or by the way they talked.

One day in early January, just after the holiday rush had worn all of them at Rheinchild's, thin and exhausted, she was the witness of something that sorrowed her and

strained just a little more, the thin filaments that held her innocent and believing.

Miss Gillespie had complained of being sick all morning and at noon had left the store. Hagar saw nothing unusual in this until she was leaving the supper table that evening, when Queolla LaMotte whispered across to her, "Miss G. is at it again. I told you."

Hagar was not quite certain of the real meaning of this until she reached her room. Then she stood upright, straight as a rod and listened; from some place, as if carried by the wind, that was whistling and bellowing outside like a scared herd of swine, she heard long, muffled moans.

Listening again, a little frightened, she heard coming from somewhere near another faint, stifled, yet audible groan. She was sure now that some one in the next room was in pain.

Opening the door she rushed out into the hall, crying to herself — "It's Miss Gillespie — It's Miss Gillespie!"

For just a moment she stood still, and then, without knocking, she ran into the woman's room.

The sight that met Hagar's eyes frightened her inconceivably. Stretched taut on the bed lay Miss Gillespie, part of the bed-clothes over her, while the rest lay in a bedraggled heap on the floor. Her hair was loose, and hanging down dishevelled, over her partly bared shoulders. Her face was buried in the bedding, and just under the shadow of the bed's edge stood a black, half-filled whiskey bottle.

For an instant Hagar stood with her back against the door in ghastly fright. Then a sense of duty overcame her horror, and though trembling in body and mind, she went over and pulled the woman back on to the bed, and covered with the quilt the bared arms and bosom.

Then Hagar opened the tightly closed window, as there was a nasty smell of stale air and alcohol in the room.

The cold, clear air seemed to invigorate the drugged senses of Miss Gillespie. In a moment she began again to moan pitifully. Then her eyes opened, and she tried to moisten her parched lips.

"Oh, I didn't want you to see me," she groaned. "Who told you? Why did you find out?" She covered her face with her arms now as if ashamed that the little girl to whom she had given the best that was in her, should find her in this condition.

Hagar answered: "Don't worry, Miss Gillespie. It's all right. You're sick and I'll stay by you."

"Sick, yes — drunk I am — again. Oh, my God!"

Fearing that the woman would see the liquor bottle, Hagar pushed it with her foot, further under the bed, saying at the same time, "You'll be all right, Miss Gillespie, just keep quiet."

The woman turned over on her side, and after a period of watching, Hagar arose and taking the black bottle under her jacket, stole back to her room.

In the hallway she met two of the boarders.

"Is Miss Gillespie sick?" one asked with a suppressed chuckle.

"Yes, but she'll be all right before long," replied Hagar, with all the dignity she could muster.

After hiding the bottle under the mattress of her bed, Hagar went back to continue her watch. At midnight the moaning began again, but it was apparently a delirious dream and Hagar had only to pull the covers back on the bed and open the windows a little more. But it was three o'clock before she dared to leave the room, and at seven o'clock she was again up and dressed.

Not knowing whether to disturb the sick woman, she

tried tapping lightly on the wall, feeling that this would not awaken her should she be asleep; at the same time she said softly, "How are you, Miss Gillespie?"

There was a swishing of clothes and the movement of feet, and then a worn voice against the wall, "Better, dearie; come in, won't you?"

"Are you really better, Miss Gillespie?" Hagar called back anxiously.

"Yes, child. Come in."

After Hagar had gained the room the woman asked, in a feeble voice, if she would do her a favor.

"What is it?" begged Hagar.

"Take the bottle and—" she laughed faintly as Hagar grew pale, "throw it in the alley on your way to the store."

"You leave that to me," said Hagar.

There were enough evidences, to Hagar, of the ordeal through which Miss Gillespie had passed. The eyelids were red and swollen, face puffed, and her hands trembled and twitched constantly.

Seeing Hagar observe her, Miss Gillespie began to speak in a voice that showed even more the effects of her struggle.

"I didn't want you to know, Hagar," she half moaned. "No, I didn't want you to know. Oh, I'm so sorry, so sorry." Her voice gained more strength as she went on. "But maybe it will teach you something, Hagar. If I had always stayed the way you are now, you wouldn't see me here like this."

Hagar sat down on the edge of the bed and Miss Gillespie took hold of the little hands with her own trembling fingers.

"You are good to me, dear," suddenly exclaimed the woman.

"You've been good to me, Miss Gillespie," replied Hagar.

"Yes, but you will have everyone good to you, child. They don't think of me any more."

"Please don't talk that way."

The older woman sat upright in bed while the greenish shade threw a sickening light upon her face and emphasized the deep pallor.

"I know what you will think of me, dear," she began. "You may have a more innocent mind and a bigger heart, but you will think like the rest of them. Nearly everybody is alike, only some don't like to find themselves thinking the things they do."

She stopped to press her palms against her throbbing temples.

"Yes, kiddie, there is only about four drinks difference between a good woman and a bad woman. But those four drinks are pretty important when people have a chance to think hard about somebody else."

"Can't I get you a cold towel?" begged Hagar.

"No, I'm all right," sighed Miss Gillespie.

Under Hagar's sympathy, Miss Gillespie improved rapidly, and when Hagar returned from breakfast the woman had fallen off into her first healthy sleep.

Hagar was surprised to see Miss Gillespie come into the store about four o'clock that afternoon, and it made her nearly want to cry when she saw how the woman turned off every question concerning her illness.

A few nights later, Hagar sat by the side of Miss Gillespie's bed, while the older woman, now quite recovered, talked to her. In a way that cheered Hagar greatly, Miss Gillespie told her about the different phases of love and how a woman must meet them. Only indirectly did she refer to her drunken orgie.

As the child listened, open-eyed, Miss Gillespie said:

"Oh, Hagar, you don't understand the muddle of being a woman my age. I'm nearly thirty, think of it."

"That's pretty old, isn't it?"

Miss Gillespie smiled. "You dear, it certainly is." Then she went on. "You know a woman doesn't amount to much unless she is really a bohemian or a booby."

She hesitated to say that she mustn't talk in this manner to Hagar, but the child begged her to go on.

"What do you mean by a 'booby,' Miss Gillespie?"

"Well, a woman who's married because she's scared of the game, afraid to hold out against the odds, and marries some man for a meal ticket and a front parlor.

"That's a problem you don't know anything about, but I guess I can talk to you. I'd talk this way to my daughter, if I had one. If a woman is a bohemian, she learns and suffers for it,—if she's a booby she suffers more, because she dreams of the things the bohemian has and can't get them."

"You mean that a married woman is worse off than a person who is a bohemian?"

"Much worse off, sometimes, child."

Hagar thought for a time. "Well, I don't think," she said earnestly, "that a woman who has a home and is married is as bad off as those women who go around in the restaurants all the time."

"Oh, you don't understand," answered Miss Gillespie, with an effort at smiling. "I'm talking about what they go through in their minds. The woman who goes around to the restaurants, as you say, at least has not fixed herself so her dreams can't come true, if there happens to be a chance." She thought for a moment. "I don't believe that a woman suffers, no matter how late it comes, if she is *really* in love. Love is a kind of chloroform that makes you laugh and be happy—and then dulls

you; maybe it is because it has the power of not letting you know you are suffering, when you really are."

Hagar interrupted: "But you've always told me, Miss Gillespie, that people ought to be good."

The woman paused to say that Hagar was too young to understand her fully.

"You don't understand, Hagar," she said. "I'm not preaching that kind of goodness. It's only that I like you and am going to try to keep *you* good, if I have anything to do with it.

"This is the only way you'll learn. There's got to be some method. You've got to get at all sides of the game. It's better to be good because you know about it and are too tired of life to be bad, than it is to be good just because you're afraid to be bad."

She took hold of Hagar's hands and caressed them.

"Here I am getting old, dearie," she went on, "and pretty soon my skin will get a little drier than it is now, and I'll look older and more worn out. You know why?"

Hagar kept silent.

"You don't know why, do you?" Miss Gillespie asked.

"No, I honestly don't, Miss Gillespie."

"Well, I'll tell you. It's because I'm being what people call good. It's all rot, that's all. I'm just not living up to myself, or to nature. Oh, well, it's because I haven't got a baby around me. Yes, that's it. Every woman is born to be a mother. It's her natural instinct, and she was made just for that and nothing else. If she hasn't a baby around that will take the affection from her that is stored up, she begins to get old. That's the reason old maids look skinny and tired. Oh, Hagar, you don't know how I want a baby, especially in the morning, when I wake up and see myself lying there worthless and alone. Now what has good or bad got to do with that?"

Hagar sat quietly throughout the woman's confession. But now as Miss Gillespie revealed in words her innermost desire, Hagar felt puzzled, even a little affected.

"I don't quite understand you, Miss Gillespie," she said.

"It's very plain, Hagar. Women have got to give food to that part of themselves, or they'll go to pieces. They are born to be mothers. You take a man that is used to the farm and put him in a stone mansion in the city, and watch him. Why, he'll get sick and die off, because he isn't following his natural instinct. It's a good deal the same thing with women.

"I've watched a lot of them and just about the time they get to be thirty or so, if they haven't got this baby around, they go to pieces. They get reckless, do crazy things that they would have never thought of five years before." She looked steadily at Hagar. "You know what I think, child? Well, I think that they ought to make a law that every woman should have a baby before she is thirty. One way or another. And when I say that, I'm not telling you to be bad.

"If every woman in the world that had waited until she was twenty-five, and then had not married for love, would go out into the world with the intention that she would marry, *without* the license, the first man she loved after that, there wouldn't be such a thing as good and bad people. It would be because they were too sincere and honest with themselves. No woman who loves the child she has borne can be a bad woman."

Then she discussed Miss Gibbs, the crabbed head lady of her department at Rheinchild's.

"Look at her. There is a good example for young girls. She's mean and hot-tempered and soured on the world. She's nearly forty now and yet when you talk about young men to her, those hard eyes of hers get dim

and she smiles kind of sickly. That smile is the most hideous thing I know, Hagar. Poor thing, she will never let go of the idea that some day she is going to get married. And yet I know that there was a fellow in her life when she was younger, who loved her and she him, but who didn't get married because he had no money. There is a good sample. Supposing they'd have gone ahead and married without the license until they could have afforded to buy it. She would have had a child now, and I'll bet she would be just as tender and kind as anybody.

"But even if she is getting a little crazier each day," Miss Gillespie continued, "the idea that she's going to be married and loved some day is like a life-saving belt for her. If she didn't have that idea in her head she would go under."

Hagar commented that she thought Miss Gibbs was hopeless.

"Well, maybe she does appear that way, but think what she might have come to if she would have just been what other people call bad. Why, look at me, Hagar. Don't think I get under the liquor because — I want to. Oh, it isn't that, my little friend. I don't like the stuff. But it gets me just the same. I get so blue, sometimes, when I think of what I might have had, and how I believed in other people's views of things — why, I pretty nearly go mad."

She looked curiously at Hagar for a long time.

"You know, kiddie, I don't know why I should talk like this to you — I guess because you're so soft to have around, and kind and sympathetic. . . . Well, to go back, my head gets filled with thoughts of that past. I remember how I used to hug and kiss him, and beg for a baby — and then I think of how he was only fooling with me — yes, I get the blue devils when I think of it, get sort of confused. If I didn't drink, I'd do something

worse." Her lips thinned and pursed together. "Once I came near killing myself. I even got a revolver."

Hagar held her breath, as the woman's voice died down.

"But I am too much of a coward. I'll always be sitting in this room, thinking, and getting more stale, and old. And I'll go down to Rheinchild's every day just like now."

CHAPTER XIV

ONE night Hagar and Greenfield sat together until midnight at a table in the back of a German restaurant on Fourteenth Street, and he revealed to her for the first time the exact regard in which he held her, telling her how he loved her, and relating in tender words how it had hurt him at the very beginning to see her back of the counter selling shirt-waists. He told her how difficult it had been to keep from wording his affections long before, mentioning that he had created the position of guide for her, because he couldn't stand it when he realized how poorly she was living.

"No, I couldn't stand it, dear," he said, with his hands closed tight over hers. The expression on his face at that moment, and the feeling in his voice, remained by her for many days.

He took her home in a carriage, but he did not take advantage of the privacy to kiss or embrace her. He was really very kind and gentle. Yet she was not able to sleep throughout the night. For a long time, she realized, she had been aware of his attentions and the message they conveyed. And as she lay there open-eyed, she wondered why it was that she was always so scared and nervous, whenever he came near her.

Standing in the store vestibule next evening, deep in a reverie, she heard his familiar voice. It came simultaneously with her thoughts of the night before.

"You can't go home in the subway in this weather," he said, pointing to the drifting snow, and placing his

hand over hers on the umbrella handle. "It'll be so stuffy and crowded, you wouldn't be able to stand it."

"Well, what am I to do?" She answered him rather sweetly, as if to say that she was glad to see him again.

"You're to come take a bite with me, and we'll see about getting home later."

Hagar protested that they had been together just the night before.

"I don't think we ought to be together so often," she said.

"Why not?" He looked at her steadily for a moment, then said firmly: "Come."

She took his arm.

"Did you miss me to-day, Hagar?" was his first question after they had gained the opposite side of the street.

She hesitated. "Some —" she said at last, with a little coy laugh.

"I missed *you* a good deal, kiddie," he murmured.

"I'm sorry."

"I am very glad. You don't know how fine it is to feel that you want some one by you all the time. I don't suppose you feel that way?"

Then, before he gave her time to answer, he said, pointing to the little worn, black, leather bag at her side: "Why do you carry that? It's worn out."

"Well — I — it was a good one when it was new and I would rather have an old good one than a cheap new one."

"You're a funny little thing," he said jovially, as he looked into her eyes. "You know very well you only need go into the leather department and pick out what you want. Why haven't you?"

"I never thought of it."

"Well, you see that you do it to-morrow. I don't want anything about you that will spoil your good looks."

"You are very kind, Mr. Greenfield."

"Yes, but you don't appreciate me," was his comment.

He took her to Mouquion's and after dinner they had their demi-tasse downstairs.

Ordering coffee for two, and a cognac for himself, he settled back against the cushioned wall, with his hand gently touching Hagar's.

Then a sudden thought made him call the waiter and order "two cognacs."

Presently the liquors were placed on the table in front of them and he explained that cognac was the only dressing to use in black coffee. As she hesitated, he said kindly:

"Why, it's all right, Hagar. You know I wouldn't give you anything that would hurt you. And it would please me very much if you would do little things like that, now that we understand each other. It would make me think that you cared — just a little — for me."

He spoke as if he felt very sorry for himself. But he was delighted when Hagar poured the liquor into her coffee, as if to show him that she really did care.

In friendly confidential fashion they conversed the whole evening, though he was careful never to imply anything suggestive in a direct way. Whenever he wanted to say something along intimate lines he would always handle the subject as if it concerned some one else, and seemingly tell a story about one of his friends. He knew he could talk to her impersonally and word the daring emotions and desires that surged through him, but he knew too, that with Hagar, nothing could be placed in blunt, startling fashion. He must be calm, suave, kind, he told himself.

Greenfield came all the way back to his office that night after he had taken Hagar home. A small business deal troubled him and he meant to gain the seclusion of

his office to plan out the proper method of procedure. It was nearly midnight and the night watchman had to be notified before he could gain an entrance into the building. It hardly seemed worth the trouble. And after he reached the secluded room he found himself utterly unable to give the problem that had brought him, the proper amount of thought. Instead his mind continually dwelt upon Hagar.

He sat in his chair thinking of the soft delicate skin, of her small full bosom. He recognized how different was his pursuit of this child, compared to his methods with other women. Yes, there was no doubt but what he desired her to an inordinate degree; but did she know this and would the end come about in the usual fashion? Or was she just fooling him. Surely she couldn't think him so gullible as that.

It was different with Hagar than with other women, after all, he reasoned. With her he was forced to put on his best manners, to submit to her apparent innocence without a protest. How ridiculous it was that when away from her, he could plan on some final mode of attack, and then always have the situation the same whenever he went to her.

Though he had come on a business quest, Greenfield sat idle in the darkness of his office, until two o'clock. He thought over his adventures of the last half dozen years, of the many women with whom he had consorted and the pleasures they had afforded him. And when he locked the door after him, and walked through the silent store to the street, it was with the feeling that he must be stronger with Hagar and not give in to her so easily.

But when he reached his room at the hotel he was less defiant and more weak than ever. A well defined pang of loneliness struck him as he turned on the switch button of the electric light. In that moment he saw clearly

what Hagar had done for him. It made him somewhat rebellious. He saw that since he had known her, he no longer found it possible to mingle with the women of his past acquaintance. He realized that this was not a passing impersonal episode, but that Hagar was a woman whom he really loved, a woman whose arms would keep him from terrible evenings of loneliness and unrest.

For some days Greenfield reasoned that it was not Hagar's charms, but just the fact that he was growing older which gave this sudden desire for quiet and peacefulness.

In his mind's eye he would see her, a little innocent girl, with shining black hair and wonderful ivory skin, and would imagine her wearing a Parisian gown, her neck encircled by rows of pearls and diamonds; he would picture himself opposite her, in some well lighted restaurant, where all the eyes would be envying him, and he would realize that it was the girl herself he wanted, that he must carry on the fight.

All his life he had seen beautiful women in the possession of ugly stupid men, and knowing that he was thought rather handsome, he had come to lose confidence in his own ability for not discovering some woman that would vie with them. Here, indeed was the opportunity.

About a month after the evening when Hagar and Greenfield were at Mouquin's, he gave her a first insight into his philosophy regarding her. The revelation came so gradually that she met it unsuspectingly, as if he had been talking about some part of her dress, or about business.

Over a deep, blood-red claret lemonade at Louis Martins, he told her exactly what he thought of her. Listening to him she was in turn, grateful, startled, perplexed, but with it all finding a great satisfaction in having her vague feeling of unrest at last explained.

"You are built a certain way," he said. "I know

because I have watched a lot of girls, at the store and other places. And it is all fixed up for you. Your eyes, your lips, your whole body has been built a certain way, and it wasn't meant for you"—he leaned over the table earnestly—"to sell shirt-waists. Maybe it is too bad that you can't—but you can't. It won't help it either if you fight, because it would only be fighting against yourself. And you'd wear yourself out doing that.

"You might even try to game it out behind the counter, until something happens, or somebody came along. But nothing ever happens and they never come. At least not to take you where you belong. You are not a crude piece of material that can work on a few dollars a week. Yes, I know. Maybe you do too. You need pretty clothes, soft crushy things that cost money, and you like attention, you like having men turn around after you and all that, don't you? I've watched you."

He went on in a soft alluring way of speaking and the words came soothingly to her ears. He said she was like a hot-house flower, a rose, which, if exposed too much to the cold winds of adversity, would lose its beautiful blush.

It was this blush, he described, which was in reality her beauty, that protected her at all times. It made people kind to her, it gave her the best that was in them, and it was a veneer that was only beautiful when it was well taken care of.

"If you don't watch out," he said on, "the raw air will eat at the petals. Oh, little girl," he whispered nearly in her ears, "don't lose this blush, this great beauty. Supposing you have beauty and fragrance, just like a rose, you will wither like the rest of the flowers if you expose yourself and are not taken care of. I make this comparison to a rose," he said, watching

the effect of his words, "because I think it makes a pretty good argument. If you expose yourself to hard work you will become just as ugly as the rest of the girls."

As he spoke of her beauty being lost, she looked at him strangely aroused.

Greenfield perceived that his words had carried some message to her. He hastened to add: "You'll have to give in some day, Hagar, and the longer you hold out, the more foolish you'll be."

Hagar was silent for a long time. "Well, what am I to do?" she then asked.

"Why, make it easier for yourself. I love you — I am willing to do all I can."

She looked at him in a puzzled way, saying, after some time, "I don't believe I quite understand you, Mr. Greenfield."

For a moment Greenfield thought that this might be the moment to explain everything. And then he saw that it would be a great mistake, at least at this time. He would not even be able to kiss her here. It would have to be in some place, where they were alone.

With some hesitation he took out of his pocket a little memorandum book and from between its red leather covers, tore a slip of paper. "I'm living on Eighty-seventh Street, at this address," he said simply, as he wrote down a number. "Will you come?"

"Why, I —"

Greenfield was watching her closely, not quite understanding whether she realized the meaning he meant to convey. He took her hesitation as meaning fear more than anything else.

"Oh, it's all right," he spoke quickly. "You need only come to the first door and ask for me. Yes, you come there and I'll tell you what I mean. We'll be alone and able to have a dandy talk. There is a big grate fire

in the sitting-room and it's perfectly all right. You will come, dearie, won't you?"

He looked steadily into her eyes and gradually pressed with greater intensity the hands that lay clasped under his own.

"Will you?" he asked again, in just a whisper.

"Yes, I guess so," she answered, her eyes looking far in front of her.

They set the time for the following evening.

Hagar grew so restless during that next day that at the closing hour she decided to visit her mother for a short time. A chat might put a stop to the nervousness that so troubled her, and make her look forward to the evening with more anticipation. Then, it was a good time anyway, as one thing or another had kept her from going up to the house for nearly a week.

There was the usual affectionate greeting, when Hagar entered her mother's room; and then Mrs. Revelly, who had been sitting at the sewing machine, went back to her seat.

"I'm going to keep right on working, dearie," she said. "I want to finish up this waist to wear Sunday."

Hagar's eyes brightened with professional interest. "Let me see it, mother."

Mrs. Revelly handed over the half-finished garment, and awaited with some anxiety her daughter's verdict.

Hagar looked at the sleeves critically.

"I think, mother, they ought to be kimono. We just can't get rid of anything that ain't kimono."

"Wouldn't it be a little bit hard to make kimono sleeves in this thin goods?" Mrs. Revelly asked.

"Well, I don't know, but all ours are like that. Say, mother, why don't you come around to the store and act like you were a customer, and I'll show you everything, and you can see how it's made."

Mrs. Revelly was interested.

"Why, maybe," Hagar went on, "I could fix it that you'd get some stuff at discount — like I do. I believe I could fix that."

Mrs. Revelly thought that would be fine. "I suppose all you girls can buy things cheap like that?" she queried.

"Well, I don't know if they all can," said Hagar, a little self-consciously.

Mrs. Revelly leaned over the sewing machine with an expression in her eyes that was a question.

Hagar made no reply, however, but played with her leather bag.

"Why, can you get a different price from the other girls, Hagar?"

"Why — I guess maybe — I can. Mr. Greenfield — said something about it the other day."

"He's the manager of the whole store, isn't he?" remarked Mrs. Revelly.

"I think he's got pretty much the main say. We hardly ever see Mr. Rheinchild." Hagar picked up from the floor a piece of goods that had fallen from the machine. "He's been real nice to me," she added.

When Hagar went up the brown, crumbled steps of the house on Eighty-seventh Street, she realized that the visit to her mother had helped very little; she really did not know exactly why she was going, or the meaning of her mission; she tried to tell herself it was only different from going to a restaurant, in that she was going to his house instead. No more than that. And she did not know whether the sensation of aching and emptiness about her heart was due to the fact that she had walked fast, or to a strange feeling of fear and guilt, that she could not explain, and for which she saw no reason.

Hagar did not really understand at all what Greenfield was proposing, and as she went up the steps and rang

the door bell, there was in her mind a little feeling of regret, because she knew that she did not love him in return for all his great kindness to her.

It was this feeling that was the first thing she explained to him, after she was settled in the big plush chair he had pushed up for her in front of the fire.

"Don't worry, dearie," he said; "you'll care more for me some day. I guess I love you enough for both of us now."

He took her dainty hand and petted it.

Like a picture of the Degas Dancing Girl that hung in the framing department at Rheinchild's, she seemed to him. Her black, nearly coarse, hair was in such direct remarkable contrast to the soft transparency of her face, while the flat glossy strands that came down low over her forehead defiantly accentuated the simple freshness of her mouth and her eyes.

Such charming youth he had never encountered. It was innocence, he told himself, but not doll-like, or stupidly pretty, such as he had usually noticed in young girls. Instead there was something desirous, expectant, in the limpid darkness of her eyes; and when he watched her mouth, a feeling that he must kiss her came in a hot wave of passion that he could barely subdue. It was a mouth that was small and yet well curved, with lips so full, he could only think of it as being some flower that was unfolding its petals for the first time.

Hagar became conscious of his admiration and lowered her head with a soft, little laugh, saying: "I wish you wouldn't look at me like that, Mr. Greenfield."

"I'm only admiring you."

His face was very close to hers now. She wondered if she would let him kiss her, should he try; while in his mind came the thought that perhaps this was the time to unleash his passions.

But he restrained himself valorously as he saw a frightened stare creep into her eyes. This puzzled him. He was not sure but that she knew his motive and was using a woman's strongest argument, fear and weakness, to combat his impulses. However, he decided he must still go slowly.

So he was kind and attentive and quiet. They talked of the store, of the latest shows, the new restaurant that had startled all New York; he talked about himself, told her how he had gone through high school and graduated at sixteen and was getting ready for college, when his father's clothing establishment went into an unforeseen bankruptcy. With a great feeling of sympathy, Hagar heard how he had been compelled to start as a bundle boy at Rheinchild's. Then came the successive steps, at last rising to his present high position.

"But I mustn't talk of myself," he whispered sadly.

She whispered back. "Oh, yes, please — I like to hear you."

He drew his chair a little closer, thinking: "This girl is strange, so contradictory. I don't know whether she wants me to go on, or whether she doesn't yet understand at what I am driving."

Stammering that his life had not been all roses and gold, he took her hand and said, with a show of longing in his words: "Yes, there was a time between twenty and thirty, little girl, that I lost all the pleasures that other men have. There was no youth for me then. I had to work hard."

Hagar responded with a remark that he shouldn't think so sadly.

He saw that she really felt sorry for him.

Then she asked: "How old are you, Mr. Greenfield?"

"Well," he replied, bravely — an effort which he made

forcedly artificial—"I guess I'm not so awful old—about thirty-seven."

Hagar thought that that was a "just right" age, while he regretted that he had lopped off four years by his lie.

"Maybe she'd feel sorrier for me, if I were older," he told himself.

"And you, how old are you, Hagar?"

"I'll be seventeen pretty soon," she said proudly.

At that moment there was a loud ringing of the door-bell and the sound of a man's voice mingled with a tramping of heavy feet up the stairway.

"You don't live here by yourself, do you?" she asked.

"Oh, no, I just have these two rooms."

Hagar noticed his face redden, but she attributed it to the heat of the room.

"It's hot in here, isn't it?" said she, in benevolent desire to justify his heated face. "Why don't you open the hall door?"

Hagar had started to do this herself, when he arose hastily and gently pushed her back into the chair.

"Too many people coming in at this time of the evening," he told her.

"What difference could that make?" she asked.

"Anyway they have gone upstairs."

"But I don't want them to see us, just the same."

Then he changed the conversation to other things, and Hagar, though puzzled at his manner, said to herself that it was just that same strangeness of his she had noticed so many times before—often he was very strange and changed the subject quickly, and she remembered an occasion when he had very hurriedly placed her in a dark doorway for fifteen minutes and how at another time he had suddenly forgotten that she was with him and jumped off the street car and left her alone.

Then he arose from the chair and nervously walked up and down for a few minutes without speaking.

"Have you lived here very long?"

Though his cleverness did not forsake him, he still saw that she had steered him into a tight place, with her question. He looked at her in a quizzical way as if to say, "You're a pretty wise little girl, aren't you?"

But Hagar was not at all suspicious, even thinking that he had everything put away in the bedroom. His answer, "Oh, I only moved in yesterday, my trunks are still in the other place," satisfied her entirely.

And when he sighed dejectedly and added, "That's the way we live, those of us who haven't anyone to look after us," she felt actually sorry for him.

Hagar looked up into his face, and asked if it was necessary that he lead such a lonely life.

"What else is there to do," he answered wearily.

Then he leaned over and put his lips very close to her eyes. "You don't mean, Hagar, that—you'd help me out of it?"

So close were his lips to her cheeks that he could not control himself. He kissed her, once on the cheek, then on her lips.

Frantically Hagar tore herself loose from his embrace, her face coloring rhythmically, with each breath.

"Why, Mr. Greenfield, how dare you do that," she cried angrily.

It was hard for Greenfield to control his temper at this unexpected repulse. He had really thought that she was well under his influence. As Hagar stood glaring at him, he could only think of how childish she looked.

He admitted to himself that perhaps he had been foolish, but he was more determined now than ever before, to win her.

• After some time, when he had fairly well calmed him-

self and Hagar had settled back in her chair again, he said:

"You're funny, Hagar. You tell me you like me, yet you carry on like that, and won't even let me kiss you. What's a kiss anyway?"

For a moment Hagar was silent. "Oh, it seems different, Mr. Greenfield, with you somehow. It just spoils things to have you act that way. Somehow I really thought you were different. You've been so kind to me." She thought of Mr. Herrick, and a half dozen others whom she had met since she left school. "Why, they all act that way," she continued. "Everybody tries to kiss you and put their arms around you. I kept thinking you're different than them, but when you do things like that I am so disappointed in you."

Greenfield searched in his mind for the right answer; he came near telling her that she was more innocent than he had thought, that all men were alike, that it was only their methods which differed. But he saw he should not say this. Strangely at a loss for the right word, he said at last, "I'm sorry you feel that way about it, Hagar."

For a time both of them were overtaken by an awkward silence. Hagar sat gazing into the fire while Greenfield studied her head and face, feeling a little foolish when he thought how after all the weeks and months, he had let this slip of a girl repulse him without his offering any resistance.

He allowed her to leave as soon as he thought that the incident had passed from her mind. And she felt a renewal of her confidence in him when she walked by a fruit store on Columbus Avenue and noticed that a clock said it was not yet ten-thirty. He had not let her go, however, until she had agreed to come the next evening.

Greenfield felt that he understood thoroughly the work-

ings of Hagar's virginal mind. He reasoned that he understood perfectly that defiant moment of repulsion and struggle to free herself from his grasp; he told himself it wasn't that she was more innocent or that she had better self-control when she said, "How dare you?" but that she was only repeating the words that every young girl had instinctively repeated from time beyond memory.

Of course, she was supposed to meet his first caresses in just that manner. It might not have been that she wanted to. It was merely her natural instinct. That was it. Had he not noticed, for just the slightest fraction of a moment that she clung to him, when his arms were around her? She would probably run through all the set stages, at first rebellion, then the gradual relinquishing to uphold her pride, and at last concessions and surrender—with the surrender coming in a state of semi-consciousness so that she could say afterwards she had no idea of her action. Yes, he had been a fool to postpone a decisive action for so long.

There was only one way. That was to take her by storm so that the brunt of blame could be carried on his shoulders. Women were all like that. They dare not assume any responsibility for their succumbing.

It was past eight-thirty the next night when Hagar went up the steps and rang the bell of the house on Eighty-seventh Street.

The fat colored woman with the blue dress, answered the door as before.

"Is Mr. Greenfield in?"

"Yes. Just come in. He expects you?"

"Yes, I think so."

She went in. A moment later Greenfield met her.

Starting to greet him, she was instead much bewildered when he grasped her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

"Now sit down, dear. I'm so glad you came."

He had taken her by surprise. She wanted to say several things at once, but all her devastated senses could muster was the sentence: "Why — why — do you do that — after last night?"

Her face was flushed and her lips quivered.

"Because I love you. That's the reason. Now let's sit down."

Before she had time for comment or parley, he went on: "We mustn't be fools. I love you, Hagar, I honestly do, and you know it and this game can't last forever." He looked up into her face. She had risen and was gazing absently into the mirror over the mantelpiece.

"Why do you stand up so scared-like? Sit down, won't you?"

He pushed the chair toward her.

Then, a great deal more gentle in his manner, "I don't think you really and truly care for me, Hagar."

She turned her eyes to the floor. Within her was a question that was nearly consuming her. She was asking herself if all this fight on her part was not futile and foolish, as he said it was. Surely he did care for her. How kind he had been to her. And how he was begging her now! Wasn't she really foolish to treat him so meanly?

Greenfield repeated again his remark, noticing at the same time that she was no longer fighting him.

"You know better than that, Mr. Greenfield," she replied. "I do care about you."

"Then, why do we fight each other?"

"Why — I don't — believe — I want to fight you, Mr. Greenfield. I don't mean to."

Greenfield studied her face with evident seriousness, at last saying, "You've been thinking some since last night, haven't you, Hagar."

"Yes, I guess I have, a little."

"And what have you thought, Hagar?"

She lowered her lids and surprised him somewhat by taking hold of his hand.

"What have you thought, Hagar?"

"Oh, I don't know — what I think. You make me feel so funny. Sometimes I'm happy, then again, I'm so nervous and shaky when I'm with you, I don't know what to do." She hesitated. "I didn't want to come to-night, but somehow I just couldn't help it."

Taking hold of her free hand, Greenfield led her over to a wide settee chair.

"I'm going to talk to you, little girl," he began, after they were both seated. "And I don't want you to say a word, until I'm through. I've thought about this thing a long time — a good many months I should say. I don't want you to be scared at what I'm going to tell you, either. You're going to be sensible, and so am I."

He lit a cigarette, and threw the burnt match into the grate.

"Look how cosy it is here. Isn't it a dandy fire? You like big coals like that, burning red, don't you? It makes the room happier. Well, you can have all this sort of thing and more, if you will just be wise and sensible. You know what I mean? Well, that I love you, and if you return my love — well, I'll give you any old thing. Now don't you think you'd be foolish to fight off forever the way you do? You could have a dandy little place to live, you wouldn't have to work at all and you could have all the good clothes you felt like. Now what do you say?"

He looked at her intently. "Why, Hagar, you could go out in Central Park every day and when you went shopping, you'd have a taxicab waiting for you instead of the subway. That would do you a lot of good, too."

For the first time now, he saw that she showed signs of fear. The color had left her face, even her lips looked pale.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Are you ill, Hagar?"

She replied, "No, I feel all right."

"You don't look it." He paused for the moment, fearing that he was pushing matters too strongly. Through his mind was running the thought, "I'm getting her, I'm getting her."

Hagar remained silent for a long time and only the slow rising and falling of her breast, like the uneasy swelling of the sea, betrayed her hidden emotion.

Gradually had come over her a new understanding, and it seemed very suddenly to make her see things in the right light. She saw that she might wait a life-time and not be loved as she was by this man. Maybe she could learn to love him too. Anyway it would be nice to have a home, and be a real woman, with a real husband. Why had she not thought before how wonderful that would be? Supposing he was a good deal older than she. If he was younger then he wouldn't have the money to give her what she wanted. And it *would* be nice to have all the clothes she wanted.

Continuing her reflections, Hagar asked herself if she ought not feel really very lucky and happy. He was quite good looking, and could manage everybody so well. She had seen how the waiters and the girls at the store minded him.

Greenfield perceived that she was deep in some problem, and thought it was the right time now to reinforce his argument.

"You know I think it very odd," he said, "that you should hold out as if you had the world back of you, when all the time your little heart and body is starving for

good, nice things — things like fine clothes, good food." He waved his hand restlessly. "Oh, why should I go on. A face like yours should have only one kind of a life. Really, you are beautiful, Hagar, only you're not among those who can appreciate you.

"Why," he hesitated, "you remind me of —" Now he pondered over the thought for a full minute, finishing up with a pointed resemblance that had suddenly come to him between Hagar and an actress for whom a vast theatre had just been built. "She got on," he continued, gently patting her hand, "Why shouldn't you? Now be a sensible girl."

Greenfield watched her to see the effect of his words. His heart was beating quickly, and as he saw her sitting there so pale and beautiful, a passionate emotion swept through him that engulfed all the little subterfuges, the plans for calm persuasion. Forgetting himself entirely, he tremblingly drew her close to his body and held her tightly from head to foot.

"God, you're beautiful," he cried hoarsely.

For a moment she appeared to resist him, then she too seemed to lose control of herself. Her body lost its rigidity, becoming lax and yielding, her small arms went about his neck, the while he felt one wave of emotion after another follow in close succession through her little body.

"Oh, Mr. Greenfield, I don't know what I'm doing," she cried. "You must help me, please, please." And as if she were ashamed of her thoughts she buried her head in his arms.

Gradually, then, fearing that she would go back into her more sane self, Greenfield drew her gently, even delicately, onto the bed in the near-by alcove, whispering continuously into her ear, "Hagar, my darling, I love you, I love you, I love you."

At the bed's edge he again lost himself in the delirium

of the moment. Almost brutishly, he fell on the white covering with her body wedged beneath him, his lips upon her mouth.

And she, utterly helpless in his grasp, intoxicated by the cataclysmic enormity of her first real entrance into the secrets of sexual passion, clung to him, returning throb for throb, pulsation for pulsation; while through the light fabric of her thin silk skirts she could feel the warmth of his body penetrate into her own.

At last he arose and standing by the side of the bed, bent over her, saying between his kisses, "We must undress and get into bed right, dearie."

Her new, embroidered petticoat and plain, dainty chemise were already companion pieces over the foot of the bed, when she turned off the gas jet with trembling, shaky fingers. She had made him go into the next room, and now she heard his voice: "I'm coming in, Hagar."

Tumbling quickly into bed, she drew the covering high over her head. Her heart was pounding unmercifully and she felt vaguely a terrible anguish, and pain, that came as a foreboding of guilt.

Greenfield was no sooner in the room than she arose in the bed with the quilt about her, begging that he go out, that he not come near her. Her lips were tightly drawn, the soft diaphanous flesh had changed color, the little fingers clutched intermittently at the edge of the white sheet. A wild stare, fraught with fear, was in her eyes.

"Oh, don't come near me," she begged, "please, please — please —"

But he was already by her side, smothering her in his embrace.

"Don't be scared little girl," he whispered. "I'll be gentle. You'll love me more."

He took her head between his hands and drew her face to his lips. "Look at me, dear. You'll love me more, I tell

you. And I'll be so good to you, you'll see. To-morrow I want you to go down to Tiffany's and pick out some little trinkets. Now don't look so frightened and pull away . . ."

She opened her eyes, seeming somewhat reassured and quieted by the affection in his words.

He felt less anxious too, as he saw her become more submissive in manner. But to be patient was hard as, in the light from the next room, he saw the black lustre of her hair and the smooth satin flesh of her breasts.

Then she came closer to him, saying, "Well, we ought to have gotten married to-day, anyway, Mr. Greenfield."

"Gotten married!"

"Yes, we ought to have thought of it, because somehow it would seem more right. Will we get married to-morrow, then?"

The question came to him with all the emphatic impeachment he knew his cunning deserved.

"Why — dearie," he answered, "we — are not going to get married!"

She repeated after him, too startled, too stunned, to even understand:

"We are not going to get married!"

In the instant her position burst upon her with all its barren truth, and now instinct took the place of experience.

"You mean," she begged, with a crying appeal, "that you didn't mean all along that we were going to get married?"

The man beside her was totally unprepared for this strange culmination of his arduous labors. He saw the livid, convulsed face of the child with a disgust that was even greater than his desire.

"Why, you — I never said a word about marrying,

dearie. You mean to tell me you didn't understand? Why, I've been truthful every minute. Other men might have told you anything, promised anything to get you. I've been fair. Now, for God's sake, don't make a scene."

But she tore loose from his renewed grasp, her eyes dry, her voice gasping. All thought of fear had fled, though the idea that nothing would come of the dream that had nourished her for months, was too overwhelming to realize.

She was in full possession of her senses now — nearly calm even, in her resolve to fight her way out of her predicament.

In a moment she was out of bed and had slipped on her underclothing and petticoat.

"What are you going to do?" he asked rather savagely, as he sat up and glared at her.

"I'm going home. What do you think?"

Instantly all the common animalism, the spirit of revenge and conquest came back into his being, throwing off its ordinary manacle of calmness and tact. He realized what he was losing, how fooled he had been, what his builded dreams, his plans, his desires, all his investment of time had come to. He saw that he was remaining pathetically by, while this child was getting the better of him.

Frenzied, regardless of everything but his own desire, he jumped from the bed.

"Why, you little fool," he twisted her wrists painfully, "do you mean to tell me that you never understood? What are you, a baby? You know I couldn't marry you. There are a hundred reasons for that. Why, even if I wanted to, it would knock my business in the head — what would everybody say if I picked a girl from back of the counter and married her? Of course, you wouldn't understand anything like that, I suppose, looking at it

from your side. But I've got a position that I've got to live up to, in my private life as well as in my business.

"Then another thing—I'm too old for that game. And I'm not so sure but what you know that. Yes, I guess you knew it all along, and just thought you'd have a little fun teasing me. You didn't suppose I was going to spend months of time and money, give up everybody and everything, run the chance of it getting to the store, just because you'd let me kiss you in the end, did you? I'm not a school-boy, Hagar."

As his grasp tightened, Hagar became frantic.

"Let me loose," she cried. "Let me go or I'll scream."

He laughed at her, saying:

"'Twill do you a lot of good."

Then he backed up against the foot of the bed, drawing her with him, his nails buried deep in the skin of her arms. His temper seemed to have arisen again.

"You can't get out of here unless I let you. The door is locked. Anyway, what kind of a place do you think this is?"

Waiting for her answer, only an instant, he went on: "Well, I'll tell you. I don't live here. I only rented these rooms for the night." He emphasized each word with increased pressure of his nails. He was angered now and all his baser character, roused by the thwarting of his long cherished desire, came to the surface.

"No," he emphasized again. "You can't go until I let you."

For the first time, Hagar dared to look at him. She studied his face and measured his power, hunting for the truth of what he was saying.

But this strength on her part was only that instant of bravery that comes before despairing weakness, a search for some method of making him have compassion on her. At the moment she wondered where had gone those soft

words, his goodness to her; then she looked at the bluish imprints of his nails on her arms, and great beads of tears flocked into her eyes and brimmed over to her cheeks.

Greenfield was getting more and more excited. He saw her eyes search the room in their absent staring way, and thought she was hunting for some means of escape. He determined to give her a little fight before he would let her go.

All of a sudden Hagar fell in a crushed heap on the floor at his feet.

It frightened him. He stooped over her, and noticed that her breath was missing. Her face was white as the sheet on the bed.

This was another unexpected dilemma. "Damn it —" he muttered under his breath.

Then, as she seemed, instead of regaining consciousness, to collapse more and get whiter, he ran to the door, and unlocked it, meaning to call for help. Supposing she should die, heart-failure or something, and he was caught in this room with her!

He became bewildered and ran back into the bath-room, filled two glasses with cold water and dashed their contents into Hagar's face.

"My God, little girl," he cried, slapping her wrists and shaking her. "Wake up, wake up, for God's sake."

When she opened her eyes and the tint stole back into her skin, he felt like praying.

"You've given me a rotten scare, little one," he said, with a great sigh of relief.

Hagar noticed his pale face, and the beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead. Then she saw herself a crumpled heap on the floor. She looked around the room distractedly.

"Oh, what has happened?" she begged.

It was only a moment before she realized her situation

and began to sob in low, tumultuous tones that shook her whole body, while Greenfield stooped down on the floor beside her, a little regretful that he had been scared, now that she had so easily recovered her senses.

At that moment he felt a little distressed, too, that he was the cause of her miserableness. He said gently: "I'm sorry about this, little girl. Now brace up and forgive me. I guess you think me pretty bad." Lifting her into a chair, he took a wet towel and wiped the tears from her eyes and cheeks. "Honestly, I'm sorry," he went on. "Now, let's dress and get a taxi and go home."

He helped her put on her waist and when she was too weak to reach around to her collar, he buttoned it for her. After she was entirely dressed, he walked over to the mantel and rested his elbow on the marble shelf.

"Really, I didn't know that you never understood the whole thing." His voice had gone back to its kindlier tones again.

"You were so mean and brutal, I'll never forgive you," Hagar answered weakly.

Then she asked him for her coat. He handed it to her.

Greenfield wanted to get her away quickly, and when she found her shoes were still unbuttoned, and she could not manage them with a hair pin, he bent over and fastened them with his fingers.

Hagar thanked him, and her voice showed she had regained some of her composure.

He said to her now: "Well, Hagar, we understand each other, at any rate. I'm your friend just the same. You can ask anything you want of me, and always feel you've got somebody to go to, if you ever need anybody.

"Whenever you want to come," he continued, "I'll fix up a little flat and we'll have a nice time. In the meantime, I know I can trust you. Of course, it would go

pretty hard with me, if you ever said anything at the store. I can trust you, can't I?" he asked earnestly.

Hagar smiled wearily. "Oh, I guess so."

He went out into the hall, and at the telephone ordered a cab for her, into which he put her alone.

It seemed only a minute before she was back at her boarding house, trudging up the torn carpet of the stairway to her room.

CHAPTER XV

BENJAMIN GREENFIELD showed his temper more than once during the next few days. For nearly the first time he was mean to the girls, and unkind to Miss Gillespie. And when she approached him on some point of business and ventured to ask at the same time what he was doing with Hagar, he went into a terrible rage, and told her she could give up her position, if it did not suit her.

Since Hagar had undertaken her position as guide, Miss Gillespie saw very little of her and now that Greenfield talked in this manner, she understood his designs upon the girl, and determined to watch Hagar more closely.

Hagar, on her side, went to work the next morning after her experience with Greenfield, feeling that she would not dare to look him in the face. A deep loathing filled her, a hatred that made her want to strike him. Beset by many conflicting emotions all morning, her greatest feeling was of rebellion against him, though there was still something else in her understanding that disturbed her even more. It was a feeling, that, instead of wanting to run away from him, she desired to be nearer to him and learn and understand and gain a more intimate knowledge of this problem.

This feeling astonished her a great deal, for she knew she hated him, and was sure, too, that she would never give in to him or his temptations.

Strangely Hagar did not seek her mother's protection and solace during these days. Since she felt no great remorse or grief at what she had passed through, nor any

need for advice, it seemed foolish to worry her mother — at any rate for the present.

Late that morning she met Greenfield, and notwithstanding her turbulent thoughts, forced herself to give him a friendly greeting. When he said, "You are feeling better this morning, Miss Revelly?" she answered, "Yes, much better, thank you."

The turn in her affairs came during the following week.

Greenfield, realizing his clumsy failure, began an entirely new tack in his sail of conquest, deciding to leave her alone until she should come to him voluntarily. And Hagar, intuitively sensing this intention in his manner, oddly enough became a little resentful.

But it was over a month before he again asked her if she would mind lunching with him. He had noticed the changes in the expression of her face, from defiance to placidity, from placidity to bewildered irritation, and then finally lonesomeness and resignation. He thought that he had made her wait the proper time for her chastisement and was now rather sure that she wanted him, at least to talk to her.

At any rate it was very difficult for him to hold out any longer. Hagar had surely spoilt all other women for him. He could not lose in dreams nor by day the appearance of her little hands and face and ankles. As for Hagar, she had really been lonesome. Herrick, whom she saw often again, and Miss Gillespie who stole into her room at night and divided time between lectures and warnings, failed to satisfy her. One had become rather affectionate, which somehow disturbed her, while the other, the woman, lectured too much and painted so many terrible pictures of suffering and sadness, as to be merely depressing and tiresome.

So she told Greenfield she would go, and, slipped into the ladies' dressing room on the second floor just before

meeting him, to fix herself so that she looked as nice as possible. She felt exultant and happy again. Yet, to herself, while she studied her reflection and primped her hair, she told herself that she would go with him only to try to make him understand that he could be such a nice friend in a different way if he wanted to, and that it was not right for him to put himself on a level with the other men she had told him about.

"I wonder," she said, as she tied the veil on the back of her hat, "if I can make him see it."

Conscious of a certain intimacy with him that made her feel nearer to him than to anyone else, Hagar was strangely excited, though at the same time aware that it was wrong indeed that their relationship should have started upon such a terrible basis.

Greenfield met her at the corner and as they crossed Sixth Avenue, Hagar was filled with determination. She even let him have an inkling of this in her manner towards him, though he, with not unnatural egotism, only took it for a submissive consent, and was inwardly pleased.

"I've been thinking so much about everything," he told her, as they crossed the street. "Yes, I've been thinking a good deal." Then he said very suddenly, "You do love to do startling things, don't you, Hagar?"

"Do you think so?" she replied, rather more sweetly than she desired. As a reassurance she told herself that she would not start giving him the new understanding until they reached the restaurant.

Greenfield was happy to find no resistance on her part at his opening wedge.

"Yes, you act the way you think one should act who is young and beautiful, and then, when it is all over, you wonder why you didn't act the way you wanted to. Am I not right?"

"You are very — discerning," she said, looking up at

him under her long lashes, and using, for perhaps the first time in her life, a word she had heard used only a day before by a lady shopper.

As they walked along Broadway, Greenfield thought she was never so beautiful as now. He told her this and ended by saying, just as they entered a large restaurant on Eighteenth Street, that he was making a bigger fool of himself over her, than he had thought possible.

"Here I am coming back to you," he said. "I certainly didn't think I could."

Hagar did not answer him, deciding that as soon as they sat down she would tell him what was really in her mind.

They passed between long rows of tables, full of men and women, and when they found their seats, her usually pale cheeks were colored by a delicate tinge of red. It was only the old sign of a certain embarrassment that overcame her whenever she entered a public place. But Greenfield took her blushes to himself and was proud.

As Hagar waited for their lunch, putting off from minute to minute her desire to upbraid Greenfield, she looked about the crowded room, and noticed a rather stoutish man with red face and plaid waistcoat, seat himself at a table, where sat alone, two women.

The man spoke rather gruffly to them, and as she observed, Hagar thought they showed some resentment. One of the women wore a large, feathery hat that came far down over her eyes. To her the man directed his attention and the closeness of their table made it easy for Hagar to hear their words.

Said the man, "I've seen you before. You were at No. — Seventh Ave. last fall, weren't you?"

The blonde woman smiled, and answered, "Yes, but now I am at—" Then their talk became lower and Hagar turned to Greenfield.

"Did you see what that man did?" she exclaimed. "I don't believe he even knew her."

"Oh, yes, he did," Greenfield remarked, airily. "They were only playing. They knew you were listening. He is probably her lover."

Then Greenfield said that they must get to their meal, or they wouldn't have any time to talk before her hour was over.

They ate in silence for some time, when presently Greenfield, in soft low tones, interspersed by an occasional gentle touch of Hagar's forearm, or hand, told her how he was unable to think of anyone else, and how he had missed her, so that he could not hold out any longer. He belittled himself as he went on talking, told her earnestly, how silly it was, after all, that a man his age should think that a girl of her youth and beauty could care for him.

His mind, planning, and full of the decadent symphony that rang everlastingly in his being, now opened into more scheming channels. He gained courage and tact, as he saw her eyes soften, and as he went on, Hagar really became less rebellious, more of a receptacle for his words.

When he spoke sadly of his age, saying that he should be a father to her instead of a man in love, she actually felt sorry.

"Of course, I know what you think of me," he went on. "You imagine that I'm playing with you for a little amusement. But I ask you, why then do I not play with the others? Oh, I know a face and I trust you with everything. And I say it openly to you. I'm in love with you, Hagar. That's it in a nutshell. I have been ever since you came into the store that first day."

His hand was over her fingers, and she did not draw them away.

There was in the mind of Greenfield one great joyous realization. It was that he had quite suddenly stumbled onto the fact that the predominant note in Hagar's make-up was an abnormal amount of sympathy. He saw that he might never have thought of it, he even wondered how he had come to find it out.

It was three minutes past one o'clock when Hagar pushed the button on the big register clock at the store. She went alone, as Greenfield had thought it best for them not to be seen entering together.

And not until closing time that afternoon did Hagar suddenly realize she had forgotten entirely her resolve to go to lunch with him only that she might have the chance to let him understand what she thought, and how she was determined to fight out the battle to be a good woman. Instead she saw that she had a new kind of understanding of him, felt a sympathy for him which his word on parting, "Please, don't be sorry for me," did not alter.

In the days that followed Greenfield was even more kind to her, and gradually she found again a good deal of happiness in being with him. She spent much time in thinking about their new relationship, and before very long she came to feel that although Greenfield would not word it, he was beginning to see things in the way she wanted.

After work one evening, Hagar in an impulse took the ferry across to Hoboken. It seemed somewhat of a jaunt to go across the dark water all alone, though the feeling that really impelled her was the desire to get some place away from people, where she could think about the problem that troubled her.

Taking a place on the upper deck where she could lean against the railing and watch the towers of New York grow dim in the settling dusk, she felt as if she were some

adventurer going on a journey of exploration. Once she thought she could see the outlines of Rheinchild's electric sign, but it melted into the night as the boat burrowed onward.

But the trip offered little solace to her mood. Looking over the city Hagar realized how small a part she played in the great conglomerate mass. She felt so insignificant, her work seemed so futile. As she thought, she remembered what Greenfield had said to her when she told him of her proposed trip.

"Yes, go over," he said, "and don't forget to think of yourself, as you stand by the deck-rail and see New York fade away."

At that moment she wondered if he knew how lonely this would make her feel.

Looking at the black, purplish outlines in the haze, she asked herself if he was not right after all. Of what use was it to struggle. One only lived once, and life was the way you made it.

She said this over to herself many times, before the boat went into its slip, and each time found herself trembling and hesitating. Yes, she was nothing, no more than a fly, in the big city. And yet, if she didn't work she couldn't live. Life seemed hard, especially if one got so little fun out of living. She wondered why so many people wanted to live, why men who were brave and strong didn't kill themselves.

Standing there in the cold air of the bay, Hagar counted on her fingers how many years it would take her to save five hundred dollars, and found herself quite sobbing aloud when she had reached three hundred, for then she would be twenty-two, nearly an old woman.

When the boat made a wide turn at the dock, she looked down into the eddying foamy wake, which appeared like a path of bubbling ice cream, and thought of herself as

being one of the cold, white bubbles, and of the bay, and the ocean and all that it led into, as being the world.

"That's what I amount to, I guess," she said to herself several times. "I'm just one of those bubbles."

It was a strange idea, but it seemed so truthful, as she stood looking down into the water, that she gave a little gasp and turned away, trying hard to think of other things.

Greenfield came to her mind again. And now, strangely, a feeling of satisfaction shot through her, when she realized that she had some one like him to turn to.

This was really about all her trip had accomplished, for when she returned to the city and took the subway uptown, she felt even more lonesome than ever.

A week later, an incident served to show her that Greenfield was no worse than other men. This came about at an interview with the store physician, a man whom she had always respected because of his dignified bearing.

For many days she had noticed a steady pain along the calves of both her legs. On arising in the morning she was quite relieved of this drawing, incessant ache, but at about ten o'clock the pain would come slowly back again. It seemed to start at her ankles and to extend all the way up to the back of her thighs. The muscles of the calves troubled her the most, and she noticed that they were hard and sore to the touch.

One morning when the aching became quite intolerable, and one of the girls, a little thin thing with chalky skin, had told her at the lunch hour about a disease that made the flesh turn to bone, she decided to seek medical advice. An hour later she was seated in the physician's little office telling him how she was troubled and that she feared this terrible disease.

The doctor laughed and bared her foot and leg. Then after searching the limb for a possible cause, he looked at

her foot, while Hagar felt sure, because of his mysterious manner, some awful doom was about to be pronounced.

"You've got to wear a brace," he said. "Your arch is giving away. Lots of the girls have the same trouble. I'll write a little note for you to the firm that makes them. It's a steel piece, covered with leather, that fits into the shoe."

Then he gave the white skin of her foot an affectionate pinch, adding:

"You're too pretty a piece of machinery to stand up all day, anyway. Your foot was built to ride in automobiles. Tell Mr. Greenfield that I prescribe one limousine for you."

He looked at her very queerly, and when he said suddenly that she must come back to-morrow "so that they might have more time together," she felt somewhat scared.

That night Hagar visited Miss Gillespie and told her about the malady. It was the first time she had seen Miss Gillespie for nearly a week, and she thought the woman looked a little paler than usual. Miss Gillespie evidently noticed Hagar's close scrutiny and said, with an effort at light-heartedness, "No, Hagar, not drink this time. I'm worried about you."

"About me, Miss Gillespie?"

"Yes, dearie, I don't care enough to be worried about myself."

The woman placed herself comfortably at the foot of the bed and after asking the surprised Hagar to sit down, continued: "Yes, dear child, I've been watching you, and my dear friend, Ben Greenfield." Then she asked in rather curious fashion, "What is he doing with you, Hagar?"

A few weeks before, Hagar would have told the woman everything, had she asked it. But now, she felt that when

Greenfield had folded her in his arms, there was placed in her a confidence and an obligation that was sacred. Then, Greenfield had, at their last meeting, made her promise that she would not tell.

"Why don't you answer me?" Miss Gillespie asked.

"Oh, why, there isn't anything to answer." Somehow at this moment she was thinking how lonesome Greenfield must be in his room, alone.

"Has he ever taken you out in the evenings?"

Hagar hesitated.

"Yes, a few times."

"Where did you go?"

"Oh, why — we went to some of the restaurants."

"No other places?"

This questioning roused ire in the childish Hagar. What right did this woman have to question her so? She was capable of taking care of herself. It was always the same, everyone wanted to boss her about. Why couldn't they leave her alone?

And she said angrily: "I can't see why it should interest you, Miss Gillespie."

The woman looked at Hagar with an odd, searching glance which was full of soft humor and understanding.

"Please, dearie," she said, "don't get angry with me. It is only for your own good that I talk in this way. You don't suppose I would if I didn't care for you, do you?" Her tones were a little harder now. "Yes, I am fond of you, and I mean to watch you. I know Ben Greenfield and all about his life on the 'Gay White Way,' though I must confess I never thought he would pick on my poor little Hagar."

"Who said he has picked on me?"

Miss Gillespie laughed. "Why you, dear, just now — when you got angry at my question. Oh, I know Greenfield, he's really pretty clever, makes a woman feel sorry

for his hard luck, works the sympathy racket. Oh, I know him, Hagar."

"But I haven't told you anything," blurted out Hagar, with an unconscious desire to prove to herself that she had not given away his confidence.

"Yes, you have. You tried to protect him. That answers my question." Miss Gillespie drew her feet upon the bed, as if to make herself more comfortable. Then she said, rather kindly, "Now tell me, Hagar, where did he take you?"

Hagar rose from her seat in the rocker. Her young, soft face was flushed and her little hands were clutched angrily together.

"I tell you, Miss Gillespie, you shouldn't talk that way of him. He is very fond of me — and — well, if you want to know it, he would marry me if I wanted to. Now we won't talk about it any more." She stopped for a moment and then went on impulsively, "I don't see what it brings to be so darn good, anyway. You lecture to me because *you* didn't manage right, and got the worst of it. Why you lost out, and now you're only grouchy about it. That's all. And then I've been thinking about something else, too."

"What is it, Hagar?"

"Well, I've been thinking about people that are good looking. For instance, you know that you're not good looking and I'm beginning to find out that that's about all there is in this world. Everybody tries to make it easy for you if you've got the looks. I know I'm — well, not bad looking, and why should I make it just as hard for myself as it is for those who haven't got the looks. You know what I'm trying to say. Honestly, I'm getting tired of being like everyone else. And then everybody makes it so hard for me, just because I try. I don't see why I do try. It would certainly be a whole lot easier for

me if I didn't. Oh, you don't know. Even to-day the doctor at the store said something about it. Why, I could have a dozen dates for the theatre and dinner, if I wanted to. And I know some of the girls in the store would be glad to take just one of them."

Miss Gillespie studied the serious little face for a long time before she spoke. "Poor, foolish Hagar," she murmured to herself. Then she changed the conversation to other things, knowing that Hagar's impulsive nature might lead them into some argument that would make trouble between them.

As Miss Gillespie fell into a more reminiscent mood, Hagar lost some of her seriousness—the woman was always interesting when she talked of herself.

After some time, which Miss Gillespie purposely let pass for the belligerent Hagar to become more composed, she began to tell of a love affair when about Hagar's age.

"It was when I was eighteen, at a little summer resort over in New Jersey," she said, adding that she had not always had to work in a department store.

"I know," assented Hagar, vaguely urging her to go on.

The woman continued: "And every year we used to go down to this place, one of those typical summer hotels. You know the kind of place—everyone sitting on the verandah and telling each other that they'd dare do anything, because one is never serious in summer.

"Well, there weren't so many people at the hotel because it wasn't very well known. So I was a sort of belle there, though it was not much of a game, on account of the men. There were only three that weren't married. Think of it, two old fools and a young boy of about fifteen, a good-looking little fellow who was going to some prep. school in the East. He had blonde, curly hair and soft cheeks,

one of those sincere little chaps that you could tell anything to and they'd believe it. You know the kind? "

"Sure."

"Well, I picked him out to play around with. I needed somebody and I really liked the little fellow, anyway. He was easy, and comfortable, although all the front porch brigade gave me the devil for letting a little fellow like that fall in love with me."

"Did he fall in love with you?" interrupted Hagar.

"Yes, he fell in love with me, wrote notes, two and three times a day, spent every cent he could get his hands on to buy me flowers.

"It lasted that way for weeks. Then came the parting time, and the hard part. He had to go back to school. The last few nights it was pitiful to see the way he acted. He went around sad, wouldn't speak to his mother even, poor little fellow.

"He was in love with me like a man of thirty. And I had been playing with him, thinking that he would understand. But he didn't. Somehow I guess, an older woman always attracts the younger men, but she always gets paid back. She may do it until she's twenty or so, and then the table changes. Well, back to my story. I saw that my duty lay plainly in front of me, Hagar. He must be made to see that I had only been fooling with him, had only been using him as a little summer flirtation.

"And then the mother came to me and begged that I talk plainly to Harold and tell him how foolish he was. I didn't do that, but I did hit upon a great scheme. I saw it wouldn't be right to flat-footedly tell him that I didn't care for him, I had been playing the game too strong for that. At least, I didn't have the heart to do it. I decided, rather, that I would make him fall out of love with me — what I call a woman's prerogative — maybe that's not the right way to use it.

"Anyway, I went ahead with my plans. I've thought about it a good many times since then. And I guess I've regretted that boy affair, about as much as anything I ever did. He's married now, living in California some place, got three children and is pretty rich."

"That's a shame," interrupted Hagar.

"Well, they had a dance, and I decided to work my plan.

"I knew how he had talked about a certain woman who had come up from the city on a Sunday excursion. She was all painted and frou-froued, and everyone in the hotel ignored her.

"So, knowing his dislikes, I rouged my cheeks until they looked like red apples, and then went downstairs to the dance.

"He was standing in the doorway waiting for me.

"'Hello, Harold,' I said, rather coldly, and then went in and had a dance with one of the old roués whom he thought I disliked."

"Did he like that?"

"You should have seen him. At first he glared at me, and when he saw me sit out the next dance with the same old sport, I thought he'd murder me with his eyes. Well, he disappeared and I saw him no more until the next morning. They told me he had gone into the bar and bought a pint of whiskey, telling them it was for his mother, and then had drank nearly all of it. And they said that when the whiskey had taken effect, he swore and cursed me, until he became so maudlin, they had to carry him upstairs to his bed."

Miss Gillespie paused. "Now what do you think his words were as he greeted his mother?" she asked of Hagar.

"I can't imagine," said Hagar, rather excited.

"Well, they had no sooner thrown open the door and he

saw his mother there, than he cried out, so that they could hear him all over the house: 'Mother, my God, she's painted, she's painted, mother.' "

"How funny," Hagar whispered.

"That was a lesson for me, Hagar," Miss Gillespie went on. "I made him suffer and I felt so ashamed afterwards, I would have done anything for him. And that's what would happen if you went out thoughtlessly. You can't do it. Well, they took him away the next morning. You see, I was his ideal."

"I should think you would have felt very badly about it," murmured Hagar, as the woman finished her story.

"Yes, I suffered the same way when I lost *my* ideal, so I have no quarrel with God about it."

Miss Gillespie left that night with a word of warning.

A few nights later, Herrick called Hagar on the telephone. His call was announced to her just as Miss Gillespie was leaving her room, and it pleased her to have Miss Gillespie know that Greenfield was not taking up all of her time. She was pleased, too, because Greenfield, having been called to Baltimore on some business, Herrick's visit would break her spell of loneliness.

When Hagar came back into the room, her face happy and smiling, Miss Gillespie asked for the cause of it.

"Who do you think is coming?"

"I can't imagine," replied the woman.

"You'd never guess."

Miss Gillespie took one long chance. "Herrick?"

"Now what do you think of that?" exclaimed Hagar. "How did you know?"

"I didn't know who else it could be, except Greenfield, and I know he is out of town."

"Yes, it's Herrick. Do you like him?" asked Hagar.

"Yes, I do, from the one time I saw him," said Miss Gillespie. "He's clean cut and decent looking."

Herrick took Hagar to one of the big dance halls in Harlem that night. He told her he had been working hard for over a week and wanted to "celebrate." Feeling that she had neglected him, Hagar readily fell in with his wish. Not having seen him for a few weeks, she now learned that he had been planning to leave her mother's house for some time, and that only the day before, he had taken a much larger room, with a bath attached, on One Hundred and Sixteenth Street.

"I think it will make it easier to see you, Hagar," he told her. "Somehow I always felt that I must account to your mother whenever I left you and went home."

As they went down the steps of the Elevated, Hagar thought him better looking than formerly. He had on a high folded collar, of which the points came close together in front, and his hair was brushed back sleek. It changed his appearance a good deal.

"I've wanted to see you for three weeks," he said, when they had found their seat. "Why haven't you been home when I called?"

"I've been so busy."

"Busy? You little devil, I'll bet you've been leading some fellow a merry chase."

"You think you are discerning, Mr. Herrick, don't you?" she answered. "Well, you're wrong. My new job tires me out so, and then, I haven't wanted to see anyone, anyway."

"You don't appreciate me, Hagar."

"What do you want?"

"Oh, be kind to me."

"You think you need it?"

Her question came roguishly, but at that moment she happened to look into his face and saw that he was down-cast and sad. More kindly she said:

"Why, what's the matter, Mr. Herrick?"

He took her hand gently. "Well, in the first place, we've known each other long enough for you to always call me Frank, and in the second place, just — just realize that I am crazy about you."

"Now don't be foolish."

She pulled away, but he squeezed her hand more tightly, and after a time, she offered little resistance. No one in the car could see, for with some forethought, he had bought a newspaper.

In the quarter of an hour that it took them to reach the dance hall from the Elevated station, he talked more of himself than in all their previous meetings.

Hagar realized, quite suddenly, that it was a comrade, a playmate, that she was needing, that she had needed all along; some one to be gay with and frolicsome, where the relationship was not serious, and where there was never talk about the terrible things, such as Greenfield had always on his tongue.

Hagar thought about this as they walked on, and only once, when Herrick noticed her quietness and squeezed her arm and just for the pleasure of seeing him pout, she lectured him, was her mind taken away from this thought.

It seemed to her now that she had done a terrible thing in spending such a long time with Greenfield, with his worrying talk and unhappy plans. With him, it had always been problems. She thought of all she had endured with him. It made her sad even to think about it now. And at that moment she decided never again to be sad and unhappy, but always frivolous and light-hearted. Herrick might help her along in that line, she thought. Life was so short. Even Greenfield had preached that. And how much younger she felt with this man at her side.

They were within two blocks of the dance hall. Herrick was telling her of past vicissitudes, and stirring night-time adventures, while she cast furtive sidelong glances at him.

It rather thrilled her to listen to his daring tales. Somehow he made her feel proud to be with him.

Although everything Herrick said was marked by youthful bravado, his words came to her understanding like a sparkling sunlight that threw its splendor on all the dark, worrying days of the past weeks. Hagar even made him walk a little ahead of her for a time, so that she could look at his square shoulders, his close-cropped blonde hair in the back and the broad clean-shaven nape of his neck — a conceit which he was at a loss to fathom. Just before they reached the dance hall there even came over her a desire to be near him, to feel those muscles that lay pliantly under his coat sleeve.

At the moment, she could not help comparing him with Greenfield, and she realized how the other man's curly hair and worn face had bothered her. She remembered too, that Greenfield's arms were soft and not muscular.

Looking at Herrick's back, as at her command he walked ahead of her, she thought to herself: "He's a dear fellow and I've been mean to him. Yes, I've been a fool."

When Herrick came laughingly back to her, they walked along slowly, Herrick gay and light-hearted, and Hagar also happy in being with someone who caused her no fear and gave her no cause for worrying.

Gaining the Trocadero, or the Hall of Joy, as Herrick called it, Hagar waited in the vestibule, while he went in to get the tickets.

She had thought they were to be spectators, but as he came out, Herrick exclaimed:

"I've bought dancing tickets for two. We'll have a great time, if you like to dance."

He said it with some doubt in his voice, and she answered quickly: "Oh, yes, you bet. I love to dance."

However, after they went in, the hall was so crowded they decided to sit in the balcony for a while.

It had turned suddenly cold during the day and the hall was overheated. A low balcony ran around the entire room and in many places under its shadow, were couples sitting and drinking, with a draught blowing on them from the open windows.

Over-developed young girls, with weird, searching eyes, promenaded during the intermissions, stopping now and then to converse with the sallow-faced youths that stood along the edge of the cleared floor. Everyone wore a look of strange, unnatural eagerness, and Hagar could not resist letting herself slip into the same mood.

Sitting quietly beside Herrick, she gazed on the dancers' gyrations, which corresponded so closely with the sensuous music, eager for a better acquaintance with this happy bohemian life. Every now and then, as some dancer would whirl past them, she would exclaim: "How fascinating!"

Herrick was more interested in watching her than in looking down upon the dancers. He understood easily the metamorphosis that was taking place in her. He saw the eagerness, recklessness, abandon, straying into her eyes and lips and mouth.

She was indeed enjoying herself and he felt pleased and happy with her, even quite pleased with himself for having thought of this place. Hagar had shown such a disinclination to be unconventional, like the other girls he knew, that he had hesitated to take her out at all. As he called for her that evening, he had pictured in his mind, a few dreary hours spent monotonously in the parlor, or if they did go out together, some petty quarrels and arguments. Now he was indeed happy to see how he had been mistaken.

He turned to her and said, "Do you like it here, Hagar?"

"Oh, I certainly do," she replied. "Do you come here often?"

"Oh, I come here a good deal. But I'm certainly glad *you* like it."

A jaded girl with a thin pink dress and dark purplish rings of dissipation under her eyes, began dancing the Bear Dance, with one of the sallow-faced youths. Everyone clapped when they had finished, and as she threw a kiss to a group of friends in a corner, the golden bracelet around her thin wrist caught the light and sparkled like a brilliant.

After the applause had died out the tired musicians accepted a round of drinks brought to them by a bleary-eyed mulatto waiter.

Presently, another dance started up, a whirling, reckless affair, and everybody laughed and clapped again.

It was all a sham and sickly gaiety, and even Herrick was a little aware of this, but to Hagar, who saw only the surface glitter of the sodden place, and heard only the eager responsiveness in her own youthful being, this was the real life. Before the evening had passed, she had drunk a glass of beer and had danced a waltz with Herrick's strong arms holding her close in to him.

Delightful times followed that evening. Herrick took her to the theatre, to the different cafés, they sat and talked, confiding, complaining, imparting hidden secrets of their past. To Hagar it was very wonderful to be young again, and gay. It was so sweet to have a comrade and companion.

He called her up on the telephone every morning before she went to work, and not a day passed that she didn't send him a note, should it happen that they could not see each other.

Greenfield and his wishes had really passed out of her mind, except for the time she saw him at the store. She told the manager whenever he stopped and asked her how she was getting along, and why she was avoiding him, that

it was because she was thinking about what he proposed, and that she didn't want to see him until she had decided. Her little hypocrisy always made her laugh, after he walked so quietly away from her.

But she thought very little of Greenfield. Her days were too full of other things. Each morning, as she awoke with the sun shining in upon her, was a fresh fountain of expectancy. Sometimes when she walked to the subway in the rare, crisp spring air, she felt as if Heaven had looked down upon her and had spread over her some magic kind of mantle.

As the days went by Hagar grew more and more fond of Herrick. Her life seemed even too full of happiness to spend a moment in sleeping or eating. For long periods at a time she would find herself sitting with nothing in her head but an inexplicable feeling of happiness, and in her soul the vague sense of pleasure that comes to one who loves, that sense of pleasure that makes one liken every shadow, every spot of sunshine to some word or thought of their lover.

When she looked into the mirror and perceived how radiant and fresh she looked, and then compared herself to what she had been only a few months before, she felt so exultant, that had Herrick been near, she would have taken him in her arms and hugged him. Very distinctly now, she remembered how worn out she had formerly been when she went out with Greenfield.

Hagar and Herrick saw each other almost every evening. Sometimes they found a strange happiness in being silent, and would spend hours together, without a word from each other.

Then, on other evenings, they would tear around from one bohemian place to the other, with Herrick always boyishly eager to spend his last penny, and Hagar reprimanding him for his recklessness.

She had a task now, to save him from his own daring, and she took an astonishing delight in this mission, making him stop his incessant smoking of cigarettes and giving her his solemn word that he would never drink again.

And when, for a few weeks, he gave her a part of his salary to keep safely for him, she was pleased inexpressibly.

At night, when it was time for them to part so that both could get a decent rest, the ordeal was a Spartan one. But it pleased her to make this sacrifice, for his health's sake, and she found a certain comfort in her common sense. He responded to her caresses and commands like a toy. She would say, "Time to go now," and he would pout and look sad-eyed, and then as she petted his cheeks and said, "Poor boy," he would give a great boyish laugh, and kiss the lips that were uttering the command.

At other times she would murmur sweet words into his ears in an impulse of pity, which he found could always be brought on by telling her how hard he was working.

Time passed. One Sunday they went into the country, to a queer little place a few miles up on the Hudson. It was wonderful to be in the woods in the spring sunshine, and after taking lunch at the hotel, they found a path that led through a pretty forest glen, all alive with sprouting maples and elm trees. It was early spring, and they came to many soggy places, little miniature swamps. More than once he lifted her over a marshy spot, where, shaded by the trees, the last remnants of a snow storm lay perishing.

Once a great windfall, with its bruised bark, lay directly across their path, and by common impulse they halted their arm-in-arm progress to sit on its trunk.

Something compelled them to talk in hushed voices, and for a long time they sat there quietly.

Then, in the trees overhead, a solitary robin, chirping gaily, attracted their attention. Its red breast stood out like a drop of blood against the lofty blue sky.

"Isn't it wonderful, dear, with all the birds and trees?" she whispered, solemnly, as if afraid that the forest might hear.

"Wonderful," he whispered back.

For a long time they sat with arms around each other, their feet dangling above the ground. When they talked, they always spoke in the same hushed voice, as if they must needs match up with the silence and hush of the forest.

"It's great being here like this, isn't it, Hagar?" said he, after a spell of stillness.

"Oh, I should say so. I just love it. Don't you?"

"I should say. It's just like that story about the two orphans in the woods. It's just like we were the only people in the world, as if there wasn't anyone else but just you and me."

"Tell me about the story, Frank."

"Oh, I don't remember it, but it's something about two orphans being lost in the woods and then they got married, or something, and lived happily ever after."

She clasped his hand tightly.

"That's pretty near like us, isn't it?" after she had thought about the fairy tale.

"Well, *we're* happy anyway, aren't we, Hagar?"

"I should say," she sighed. "Aren't you awfully happy?"

"Sure I am."

"I certainly never was happy like this," she confided; "why I'm happy all the time now. I just go to bed feeling so happy, Frank, and when I wake up I — well, I'm just happy, that's all."

The conversation drifted on to how pleased she was that

he gave up all his vices. He asked why he ought not make the sacrifices, if she desired them.

"Why shouldn't I," he said; "if you wanted it?"

"It was good of you just the same," she replied, earnestly.

They had spent a long time in this lover-like companionship, when they noticed that darkness was coming on and the air was getting chilled from the absence of the sun.

"Don't you think we'd better go?" suggested Hagar, with the wish that they could stay there indefinitely.

He looked around.

"Say, it is getting late, isn't it?" he exclaimed.

Then he took her in his arms and started to lift her from the log, though first he planted a long, ardent kiss on her lips.

When she pushed him away, she said, playfully, "You're a naughty boy, I nearly lost my breath; I thought you'd never finish."

The remark seemed so droll that both nearly fell off the log, from laughter.

It was quite dark and cold when they reached the little inn-like hotel. The train back to the city was caught with just a few seconds to spare.

CHAPTER XVI

SPRING neared its end and the hot sultry days of early summer took the place of exhilarating zephyrs and crisp sunshine.

Hagar's companionship with Herrick was now an accepted affair of love, with all the exaltation, all the lessened forethought of youth, coupled with its sweet vigor and fragrance. With him she was happy always. If a night passed that she did not hear from him, she was obsessed by a sadness that engulfed her, spending hours on end, listening for the telephone, starting with a clutch at her heart at each little fantastic tingle, and terribly unhappy and mournful, if she had to seek her bed with word from him, still wrapped in the black silence of the night.

Sometimes it happened that after she had gone to bed his belated ring down in the hallway would awaken her out of some unhappy dream. Then she would rush out of bed athirst for his voice, and it would seem that life were again worth the living.

The telephone became their best means of communication. She grew to nearly know the ring of his call. To think there had to be a central who brought them together was hard to bear. It seemed wrong that anyone should share in this message of affection between her lover and herself. When she heard his warm voice, it was as if he had actually come and touched her, as if his words were little winged kisses that flew over the wires and nestled on her lips; as if lingering there, they would say: "Poor dear, here are his kisses."

And after such a time as this, when a belated vigil had at last been rewarded, she would rush into Miss Gillespie's room or into Miss LaMotte's and talk herself hoarse about her work at the store, or a new idea in the management of her position, while all the time she would be thinking of Herrick.

Her thoughts were of him always. One day she saw a man in the street wearing a hat that resembled one Herrick wore. She rushed after him, so that she could see his face. There was a hurried "Excuse me," and the man was left in wonderment. He could not know how empty was her heart after this disappointment.

Hagar's love for Herrick made a marked change in her attitude towards those about her. She was more genial and kind, and even talked more amiably to Greenfield.

Noticing this, Greenfield felt sure that it would not be long before she responded to his desires. He told himself with more assurance that he must only hold out and give her time. To Miss Gillespie also, Hagar was sweeter, and the woman was made happier because now she felt, as she watched Hagar's crazy little rushes about the place, that the child was content again, and had now found balance in the youthful pleasures offered by Herrick.

"You're just like a little furry kitten these days, Hagar," the woman would say. "I'm so glad."

One evening, Hagar found her lover in a mood that was taciturn, even tinged with a slight melancholy. He told her the cause was an unkind word at the factory and the fear that he might be laid off on account of an unusually dull season. She tried to cheer him by her sympathy and caresses, and when his face at last brightened again, she felt a great pride in the fact that she had been of service to him. To herself she reflected, that he needed her, and wished that she could share all his troubles in this manner. She wished that she might ever be his servitor.

That evening they went into a café, and every chord from the orchestra's strings breathed indescribable charm to her. It made her realize more than ever before Herrick's ability for keeping her in a land of enchantment. They sat for three hours in an ecstatic silence and only the glances that crossed between them, showed the tumult of emotion that was being engendered.

Herrick managed to get ahold of money during this period so that they might keep up their hunt for pleasure. Once she missed the signet ring that he usually wore, and knew that he had pawned it. Somehow this made him seem to her more manly. She was affected a good deal when she thought that he cared so much for her as to make this sacrifice.

One Saturday evening, toward fall, a railroad advertisement on a Broadway surface car caught their eyes, and almost simultaneously, they decided on the morrow to revisit the little place on the Hudson.

Herrick called for her at the boarding house at about noontime the next day, and they reached the West Forty-second Street ferry, just in time to board their boat. Their hurried plunge through the crowd left them breathless and flushed.

"Supposing we had missed the boat," she exclaimed.

"I guess we would have had to walk," he replied.

"Foolish boy."

"Well, we wanted to have a little holiday together, didn't we?"

The boat was moving slowly out into the bay, tooting and puffing its way, like some huge, clumsy, water animal.

"Didn't we?" he asked again.

Hagar took his hands and looked kindly into his stern set face, happy because she knew that of all the people who might see him, she alone was able to read what lay in his thoughts.

"Of course, boy," she answered.

"Well?"

"Well?"

"Then we would have walked because it's the only place I know where people don't bother you. I think I'll take a year's lease on it and rent it out to lovers." He laughed at the idea.

"Yes, how grand," she cried. "Then I could take tickets at the gate and see that only real lovers like us got in."

Herrick nodded meditatively, adding that they might not do much business, because they were the only two real lovers in the world.

It was mid-afternoon when they reached the little inn. A soft grey mist, laden with a purplish refraction of the sun, lay in a heavy blanket over the river and chased away their desire for a boat ride.

But on land the air was clear and fragrant, and from the trees overhead, came a sighing breath of wind.

"It's certainly a great day, Frank," said Hagar, after they had climbed the steep path back of the hotel.

A wish came into her mind to walk along a certain wooded pathway, where they could be alone, and the shadows unmindful.

Herrick, reading the unspoken words, said: "Our old walk, then, Hagar?"

Quickly agreeing, Hagar added that they shouldn't come in with the first appearance of dusk, but should get a basket with sandwiches at the hotel and stay out and watch the moon rise over the water.

It seemed a fine idea, and for a moment they quarrelled petulantly, both claiming ownership to the happy suggestion. Then they ran down the hill to the hotel for the basket of lunch.

The inn was kept by a middle-aged man and his wife,

and the childlessness of their domicile was made apparent by the number of cats that shared their home. Mrs. Mallory carried a pet kitten on her shoulder, while her husband sat upon the verandah, his pipe in his mouth and two big, grey, purring animals at his feet. They were very kind people and to Hagar they showed their regard by their petting, solicitous words and caressing glances, while to Herrick they said, as the pair went off gaily with a heavy basket:

"Take good care of the little lady, young man."

"Oh, I will," Herrick laughed, saying that he was as fond of Hagar as they were.

As the young people went up the hill back of the house, the old man and his wife stood in the sunlight on the porch, waving a farewell until they had disappeared.

"They're funny, aren't they," Hagar said, as soon as they were out of ear-shot. "But the old lady's a dear. She thought you wouldn't take good care of me, didn't she?"

"Yes, I suppose she was afraid I'd throw you from some precipice, or into some chasm of oblivion."

"Whatever that means," Hagar added quickly.

They were walking along Indian fashion, through a thickly wooded trail, and Herrick was too much occupied in separating the low-hanging branches to notice her remark.

But she called his attention to the big words he had used, and he answered:

"Why, Hagar, do you mean that you don't know what a chasm is?"

She laughed playfully. "I don't know what an oblivious chasm is. I'm not a teacher of geography, or whatever it is that talks about chasms and things." She added as if she were hurt, "I don't think you ought to — to make fun of me, either."

Herrick relieved the situation by saying that he was not serious and that she only lacked sense of humor. Then he turned around to her and, as an apology, kissed her, while she, in acknowledgment of the offering, slipped her hands through his arm and gave it a slight but well-meaning squeeze.

"You must teach me all these wonderful things, my boy," said she, very softly.

In silence they walked up a steep hill, until they found a grassy plot that was not too rolling. Here they ensconced themselves.

Down in the valley the waving tops of the maples and elms danced gaily in the fading sunlight, and off in the distance, hanging like a halo over the curving ribbon of water, was a faint rainbow, flaunting its subtle colors in the dying glow.

"Let us watch the sunset from here," suggested Hagar.

"Isn't it too windy?" he asked.

"It will die down with the sunset."

She threw her jacket on the ground, and then pulled him down beside her.

"The grass will get damp pretty soon. We ought to have thought and brought a blanket."

"Oh, I don't think it will get very bad," Hagar replied.

For a long time they sat in peace. Hagar was so happy; her heart so full and yet so light; she felt as if they were floating above the world in some big ship that kept them beyond all bother and trouble. Sitting quietly, they held each other's hands and looked out over the river.

Presently their attention was diverted by a daring little woodpecker, who began pecking his way into a tree a few feet from them. For a time both Hagar

and Herrick were lost in regarding its energetic labor.

"He's working his head off, and yet he won't ever get any place," Herrick said, as they watched its efforts. "That's the way a good many of us do, I guess."

Listening to his words, Hagar discovered a bit of sadness in them.

"Don't be unhappy, Frank," she exclaimed, as she puckered her lips. "You couldn't be if you knew how happy I was."

Then the woodpecker flew away and left them both staring at the setting sun, which, like a rim of red and gold, was slowly disappearing behind a rift of clouds in the horizon.

"We really ought to be happy, dear," she said, very quietly. "Everybody else is so unhappy."

Herrick regarded her with a kindly glance.

"Yes, I know, but it's pretty hard to keep from thinking, when you see what happens to people, just because they don't."

"Don't what?"

"Oh, don't think, and plan ahead."

"Oh, I know, but I think one gets along just the same, sometimes even better, don't you?"

Feeling intuitively that under her words was veiled the understanding that he took life too seriously (she had told him that before), he said:

"You don't know how the world is balanced, Hagar. When there is somebody really happy on one end of the plank, there is somebody on the other end who has lost what the other has gained, and is just as unhappy."

Hagar studied his serious, expressive face before she spoke.

"You talk in such riddles sometimes, Frank. You are just like father when he discussed Wagner. It used to bore me to death."

"I'm sorry, little girl."

But now there was something so strange in his tone that she turned to him and found him staring vacantly off into the settling dusk below them in the valley.

She gave his coat sleeve a little tug, as if to bring him to his senses. "For heaven's sake, Frank, don't let's get sad."

And he jerked his head back and squared his shoulders at her pleading.

"Of course, we won't," he exclaimed. "We'll be happy — like two kids, the two in the woods — yes?"

"Sure," she replied seriously. "It's the only way to be."

Coming up the river in the distance was a little steamer.

"Oh, look at the Albany boat." He directed her gaze with his finger. "Doesn't it look like a big grey bug, crawling along in the dark?"

"It certainly does."

"How would you like to be on it, Hagar?"

"I'd rather be here," she laughed. "We'd have to be sitting stiffly against the rails, there."

They watched the boat until the darkness crept up and enveloped them. And then, as the stars began peeping out from behind the weird banks of clouds, Herrick was inspired to repeat to her a little poem he had come across and memorized a year before.

"The spell is broke, the charm is flown
Thus is it with life's fitful fever:
We madly smile when we should groan
Delirium is our best deceiver.

Each lucid interval of Thought
Recalls the woes of nature's charter
And he that acts as wise men ought
But lives, as saints have died, a martyr."

"Oh, how wonderful," she exclaimed, when he had finished. "You didn't write that, did you?"

"No — not exactly. It's something from Lord Byron. I saw it once and learned it. I think it's wonderful, don't you? It's got so much feeling in it."

"Wonderful, indeed," she agreed. "I didn't even know you liked poetry."

"Well, it's the only one I know, but I love it. Don't you?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I like it a lot," he added.

"So do I."

Hagar threw herself on her back, her hands folded under her head, her eyes studying the stars.

In this manner she lay silently for some time, looking up at the changing patterns, watching each little spot of twinkling light as it made its first appearance. Falling into a reverie, she dreamed herself a queen, walking through the silvery bowers of the stars. She was so happy . . . every streak in the sky seemed a Jacob's Ladder — leading to future bliss, and every rung of it that she trod was jewelled with porphyry or topaz, and garlanded by wreaths of delicate spring-time blossoms.

Then she gave a deep sigh.

"What's the matter, Hagar?" he asked.

"Oh, Frank, I'm just thinking how wonderful it is to be up here, away from everybody, all alone."

He too lay back by her side.

"I see the great dipper," he cried out boyishly.

"Where?"

To show it to her, he drew closer and passed one arm under her head. With the other he pointed it out to her.

They studied the heavens until they had exhausted all the old figures: the Little Dipper, the Great Bear, the Milky Way; then they began counting the stars

that lay wedged in between two great ropes of clouds.

But the clouds moved with the wind and more and more stars showed themselves, and at last, after they had counted the numbers aloud with greater and greater rapidity they became very excited.

"Oh, such fun," Hagar laughed.

Soon they gave up this occupation to watch the slow mounting of a great, large star at the horizon. Slowly it moved up into the heavens, and Hagar was astonished to learn from him that the stars had motion.

He tried to explain to her that there were little systems, each with its own course to pursue.

"I thought it was the earth that moved," she protested.

Herrick thought a moment, somewhat puzzled.

"Well, maybe you're right. But I believe it is the way I say."

"I never heard of it before," Hagar commented.

Using his fingers as imaginary bodies, he tried to explain to her this theory, a little doubtful himself as to the correctness of his remark.

When he had finished, he said: "That's what they call astronomy."

Hagar looked upon him full of admiration. "Gee, Frank, you certainly know a lot, don't you?"

With a modest shrug of his shoulders, he laughed off her exclamation, though Hagar's eyes were still searching him proudly.

Then Herrick saw another planet rise along the black rim of the earth. He tried to point it out to her, but she could not locate it.

Angered with herself, she cried: "I can't find it."

"You can if you try."

"Oh, where is it?"

"There it is, where my finger is pointed."

"Oh, Frank!"

"There, don't you see? It's coming up now, right in the path of the Big Dipper. Don't you see it?"

"No — you foolish boy."

And as they lay, laughing at her inability to find the star, their bodies suddenly touched, and instantly, by common consent, as if they had been fighting off the impulse all evening, their lips met in a long, impetuous, heated kiss.

"I love you, Hagar. Do you love me?"

"Yes," she whispered.

The next instant they were struggling desperately in each other's arms, and a moment later he had won her.

. . . The moon had come into its own, caparisoned in a medley of yellow and red; the stars were echoing faint, silent messages to each other in the firmament above them.

Side by side they sat, isolated, alone and beyond a worldly turmoil.

Hagar took his hand and entwined her dainty fingers amongst his own.

"I love you very, very much, Frank," she murmured.

He remarked that he could outline the distant approach of a locomotive on the shining rails in the valley below.

"We'd better be going," he said. "It must be late."

She did not heed his words, only searching his face and whispering: "How wonderful it will be, Frank, when we are married."

Her words startled Herrick somewhat, but he whispered back, "Yes, darling."

As they walked to the inn there was chastity in her thoughts, and a deep belief in her heart of hearts that now she had entered into perpetual happiness.

CHAPTER XVII

A SERIES of moods, unusual indeed to the phlegmatic Greenfield, overtook him after he became actually aware of Hagar's indifference.

At times he would be gay and go out upon the streets or to the different restaurants, and meet his friends, in his usual affable, pleasant manner; again he would be solemn, morose, and show palpable signs of his unhappiness to anyone who would come near him.

During this period he often walked the streets wondering why he was so different now, so disturbed, when all the old possibilities for pleasure were still at hand. He would walk along, a tight grip upon the handle of his cane, murmuring that he did not deserve this loneliness, that he must get above it, and not be such a fool. Breathing self-imprecations, forming new resolutions for the future, he would stalk from one place to another.

As the weeks passed and he was becoming actually aware that Hagar was growing farther apart from him, and that he was probably losing her, a species of unrest belayed him that brought to his life probably the intensest feeling of loneliness he had ever suffered. Many times he would be so worn out from thinking and analyzing that he would retire early in the evening, only to be up at twelve or one o'clock, dressed again, confessing to himself that he could not get to bed so peaceably. If he stayed up till very late, a feeling of dissatisfaction overcame him for having passed through the whole evening without any real pleasure or diversion.

One evening he dined in a Broadway restaurant with some friends that he had known when his life had been gayer, and another time he played poker with some theatrical managers until nearly breakfast time. But this did not attract him at all in the manner it formerly had, and when another party was suggested by them to take him out of his mood, he made some petty excuse, and instead stayed in his room.

For a few days he tried looking up some of his old women friends, with just as little success. Now he noticed defects in their appearance, things about them that had become strangely repellant to him; on one a smudge of paint, a pencilled eyebrow, or a furrowed line about the eyes and mouth.

One night Greenfield drank more than usual and after spending quite the whole evening in searing reflections, he suddenly determined to forget his ridiculous longing for Hagar, at any price. Near midnight, he entered a glittering, gold-bedecked restaurant on upper Broadway. For a moment the music and gaiety, the white rows of tables, the coverlet of smoke that hung flimsily in the upper air, made him wish to leave immediately. But he took a table far back on one side, and when the waiter drew out the chair for him and said "Alone?" he hesitated awkwardly and made a resolution that he would not be alone very long.

"Yes, I'm alone —" Then he recognized in the waiter one who had served him quite often, a year or so before.

"Yes, I'm alone all right," he repeated as the man wonderingly placed before him a menu card. "How are you?"

"Oh, I'm all right, Mr. Greenfield. I haven't seen you for near onto a year."

"No?"

"But the lady comes in quite often."

"Bring me a lobster Newburg and a Scotch highball," Greenfield demanded restlessly.

The fellow hurried out through a door panelled in gold, and Greenfield, shot through with temper at the joyless reminder of his past adventures, busied himself in viewing those near him.

Sitting directly across from him, was a blonde little lady, who seemed to prop her head upon her arm, in just the manner which was so characteristic of Hagar. This annoyed him and for a time he would not look in her direction. When he looked again, he realized she was actually someone he knew. At that moment she too looked up and immediately arose to give him a greeting.

"Well, you've changed so, Bennie, I might not have known you," she exclaimed, as she took the seat he offered her. "Where have you been keeping yourself — and the Titian-haired one, what's become of her?"

He answered her rather laconically: "Haven't seen her for a couple of years."

She continued to study his face.

"Well, you certainly have changed, Ben," she mused on. "We've missed you on the Way."

She went on sprightly, probably for an effect upon those at the near-by tables, since getting up and approaching a man's table had come to be looked upon as not quite a proper thing.

"Yes, I was just telling Mabel — you remember Mabel, Mrs. Rokher, of course — well, I was telling her just the other day that you were one of the people who seemed to be wiped off the map, all of a sudden. I came near calling —"

"What'll you have?" asked Greenfield, as the waiter shadowed their conversation.

"Oh, I ought to get back — but bring me the same," she turned to the waiter — "a silver fizz."

She stopped to fix her back hair, aided by her reflection in a near-by mirror.

"What was I saying?" she asked, after a moment.

Greenfield smiled, with the smile that comes to the face of a man who is bored and yet blames himself for causing it.

"You were telling me how you intended telephoning, I think."

"Oh, yes."

Then she went on, relating in stereotype fashion how others had asked about him, and the ordeals she had passed through since she had last seen him.

While she talked Greenfield looked at the forced vivaciousness, covering the hunger in her eyes; he studied the heightened color of her cheeks, the sallowness of her throat. And as she continued, he unconsciously remembered how really pretty she had been in the years before, when youth was still nourishing her.

"You're getting older, Ida," he said, tactlessly word-ing his thoughts.

"Oh, I know what you're thinking," she replied. "But it isn't that. I'm taking pretty good care of myself."

Then she told him how she had really fallen in love and that the pain of finding her man truthless had driven her back into the ways of least resistance.

"I was so on the square with him, you wouldn't believe," she confessed. "I wanted to give this all up, once and for all. Oh, you don't know how really bad I wanted to — but he wasn't square, he wasn't square."

More in detail the woman ran over the old story, the story that every cocotte, every demi-mondaine, uses, as a last resort, to bolster up her derisive regard of normal life.

When she had finished, Greenfield asked why she hadn't stayed "right" anyway, just for the good of it.

"Oh, what was the use?" she faltered. "I'm in a rut and if I try to get out of it, I bump into some of my friends, and instead of trying to help me, they push me back again." A little wearily she added, "Oh, I guess it's no use any more."

Although Greenfield had answered her in monosyllables, she felt that she would somehow succeed in getting him into a conversation. Her surprise was great when she saw him call for his check.

"Where are you going, Ben?" she asked.

"Oh, back to the rooms, I guess. I'm blue to-night."

Her face lit up and her sadness flitted away on the instant.

"Say, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get rid of the party"—she pointed to the fattish man who had been sitting at her side—"and then I'll take a little stroll with you. What do you say? I am lonesome myself to-night."

Into Greenfield's mind there chased a thought that she was being rather clever in fitting her mood to his own. But he reasoned that at least here was someone who knew him, who would listen to him and keep him from thinking about himself. And how he dreaded going back to that room, alone—and turning on the black button of the electric switch!

Already he could see the book he had thrown on the floor, the cigar, half burnt, that had dropped on the rug.

"Yes, get rid of him," he said. "I'll wait five minutes outside the revolving door."

When she joined him and they walked off down the lighted street together, he was really glad of her presence.

They were turning off into the street of his apartment, when she said, "I don't see why you live alone, Ben."

"It isn't right, is it?" he asked, feeling a certain comfort in her sympathy.

"Why, of course not. But I guess you've got the bug too — that's the reason and I know what that means."

"You mean I'm in love?" he asked, with a faint effort at smiling.

The woman seemed very sincere as she answered, "Sure, what other reason is there. Oh, I've watched a bunch of you men, and you're all alike when you get it."

They were turning up the steps.

"Well," he confessed, as he thrust the key in the door, "You may be right, Ida. I'm blessed if I know myself."

Going up the stairway, she hung heavily upon his arm.

"Like old times, isn't it?" she exclaimed, and when they gained the hall, on the second floor, she stopped him to take his head between her hands. Before he quite understood her intention, she had kissed him, full on the lips.

He drew away from her.

"Wait here, till I make a light," said he.

He spoke rather coldly, she thought, and wondered why he could not have taken her inside.

However, she occupied her time in the dark hallway by dusting her face with a little powder rag taken from the top roll of her stocking. To herself as she applied it fiercely to her maltreated cheeks, she thought: "He's not a bad sort. You've just got to know how to handle him." At the moment she even wished she had worn her gown of blue rajah silk, which she liked so well.

Greenfield came out into the hall.

"You can come in, now," and as she entered, he pushed out to her a chair. She thought he had never before been so courteous to her, and told him.

"It's because I appreciate your sex more, now," he replied, offering her a cigarette.

In careless fashion she took one from his heavily initialed silver case.

"Now, tell me all about her," she exclaimed airily.

"There's no one to tell about — or rather there isn't, as yet."

She tossed the match out of the window.

"Not landed, then, eh. But tell me, is she pretty and young — like I was when I started out?"

"Let's talk about something else, Ida," said Greenfield, firmly.

"Very well — dear friend." She laughed and gave a long pause before "dear friend." She added that he certainly had the symptoms of being in love.

To Greenfield, the woman's question was only an echo of what he was asking of himself. For already he was wondering why he had admitted to his apartment this woman. A half hour before he was longing for some one, really anyone, who would alleviate the poignant ghastliness of his mood. He had told himself that a greeting from the lowest mucker of the streets would have been a welcomed message.

And now, when out of the gloom had come this companion of former years, of whom he had once been actually fond, he could hardly talk to her. Instead he noticed that her face was very weak and not pretty, that her lower lip drooped, and her nostrils were strangely dilated and thinned.

The woman's cigarette had burned out and she asked for another, saying, as she left her chair and went over to him: "My, but you're quiet, Ben."

"Am I?" he asked.

"Sure, are you." There was some mockery in her voice.

Noticing that she failed to interest him, she busied herself by glancing around the room, studying the open keyboard of an automatic piano in one corner, the blue canopy over his bed in another.

"You're cosy here, aren't you?" she exclaimed rather casually.

"Quite," he replied.

"And you say your little prayers each night and go to bed like a good boy — what?"

Strangely silent he remained.

She stopped her restless loquacity altogether, for a time, quieting herself in the smoke of another cigarette.

Presently she could no longer stand the silence, or his inertia.

"My God, Ben, what's the matter with you?" she implored.

"Nothing," he smiled.

She thought it a very sickly effort to appear light-hearted.

"Then say something, for heaven's sake. Got anything to drink?"

He went over to a little cabinet and threw open the inlaid mahogany door. "Help yourself," he told her, "and fix me a high-ball, too. A good stiff one while you're at it."

After their drink they seemed to get along much better together, and for a half hour or more, were quite immersed and forgetful in talking over old times, delving into the past episodes they had encountered in common.

Then the drink lost its effect upon Greenfield, and she saw creeping back into his eyes the old vague disinterested look.

It hurt her a little bit, as she thought she had been really amusing him. She saw too that after an hour, nothing had been gained, and that all the little tricks of

her trade had failed. It disappointed her a good deal. She told herself that she must be less subtle.

So she went over to where he sat on the rocker and leaned over the back of his head, putting both arms around his neck.

"Dearie," she said jauntily, unaware that the mirror reflected to Greenfield the weariness in her face, "you are no companion for poor me to-night. Maybe we'd better give up talking, and just be affectionate without the conversation."

He gently loosened himself from her embrace.

"Dear Ida. I didn't bring you up here for anything else but a little talk."

She looked at him steadily.

"Why, I don't understand, Ben." Her voice was suddenly hard and cold.

In that moment, before he answered her question, all the frantic age returned to her face, shining through to the surface for all the powder and paint. To her mind there came the recollection of a dismal failure the night before; she remembered now how she had even hesitated to give up the fattish gentleman in the restaurant, only doing it after deciding that Greenfield would be better game. All evening she had sat with that cheerful smile on her face while her head ached and back pained — and now her efforts were proving futile!

"You're not — going to have me stay?" she begged.

He spoke up decisively. "No, no." There was determination in his tone. "Good God, no —"

She layed her hand on his shoulder.

"Now don't get excited like that. I'm sorry that I'm not more alluring to-night. (A regret crossed her mind again for the blue silk gown.) Yes, I'm real sorry. Though of course you know I've wasted two or three good hours, and —"

Greenfield's voice was very gentle when he spoke to her.

"That's all right, Ida," he interrupted. "Don't worry about that end of it. How much do I owe you?" He gave a little ironic laugh. "You know, I'd quite forgotten that I was hunting for companionship on a business basis."

"I don't see why you speak that way. You know I've got to look out for myself. But I know too how it is if you care for somebody. That's what's the matter with you. You're tired of the old game, Ben. After all," she sighed, and then went on in words that were full of longing, "I guess you're right. Settle down in a decent little home some place, have the little kids calling you 'daddy.' Oh, God, that's sweet music when you come right down to it."

Then the woman left him to hide her feelings by looking out of the window.

"Ida, come back here a minute," said Greenfield.

She came back to their chair and placed her hand on his shoulder. He was watching some rings of smoke from his cigarette circle up to the ceiling.

"Ida, do you see those rings? Well, I am just as able to do what you say as I am to keep those rings of smoke from breaking apart. Just as able," he went on, quite to himself.

The woman met his words in silence. Then she looked up, as if a new determination had come to her.

"We're old pals," she asked, "aren't we?" There was a certain sincerity in her question.

"Why, yes."

"And we understand just about how much is the goods and how much is bluff in this world, don't we?"

"What's that got to do —?"

"Oh, wait till I finish," she interrupted. "I want to tell you something. I've been up here for a couple of

hours, now, trying to figure out some sort of way to get to you. Understand? Some way I could get you to come out of your grouch. First I thought I'd let you alone but I saw that that wouldn't work. Then I tried to be soft and sweet, and to get you interested in me — in the old way — and you've kept on dreaming, about something else. Am I right?

"So I said to myself, 'Ben brought me here just to try to fool himself into believing I am somebody else.' I explained all this to a studious chap from Cambridge the other night and he said it was — what you would call — psychological. Well, whatever it may be, I know just as sure as I am here that there is somebody you want, and somebody you can't get or haven't got yet. Oh, it's easy. And that one thing is the one thing you want. And you won't take anything else."

Greenfield took out his pocketbook. "Will this help you any, Ida?" he asked.

He laid a greenback before her on the table.

She had already put on her black kid gloves, that showed at the ends of the fingers worn grey places.

"Well, of course you know how things are," she replied, hesitatingly fingering the money.

"Oh, I understand how things are, Ida."

Folding the bill she put it in her pocketbook, and then bent down toward him to kiss him. As he sat back in his chair, their eyes met on a common level.

"You've kissed me, Ida," he said, gazing directly at her, before her lips had come near him.

"Oh, all right." With a little shrug of her shoulders, she arose, without performing her mission.

For a moment she stood awkwardly in the doorway.

"I guess I'll go then, Ben. You're not angry, are you?"

"Angry?"

"Yes."

"Of course not." A strange, wistful expression covered his face. "I've got more to thank you for than you know, Ida."

In the hallway she still appeared reluctant to leave, as if she felt the money too easily earned.

"What's the matter," he asked, looking up as if he expected to find her gone.

"Nothing, I'm going."

"Good-bye, Ida."

Already on the steps, she again turned to ask him when he was coming over to see her.

"I'm not coming, Ida," he called back, smiling.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE echo of her feet was still on the stairway, when Greenfield looked at his watch. It was three-thirty in the morning.

"Good heavens," he muttered to himself. He silently undressed, and tumbled into bed. At four o'clock he lay pathetically wide awake.

Then he arose, put on a dressing gown, and with grim determination, went over to the writing desk.

Many times before, he had thought of writing Hagar a letter, had thought quite often of the sort of letter it would be; he had even worded the sentences and made them full of expression, so that it would bring her flying back to him. Seeing her in the store every day made this task a little difficult, but now he was determined. A letter would express exactly what he wanted to say, without his being influenced by her innocent glances.

Mechanically he took the pen and wrote:

"Dear Hagar:

I wonder, little one, if you have ever experienced the pangs of loneliness that I am going through at this moment. Oh, if you only knew how I want you. If I had you here, I would make you forget your little foolish morals. Yes, I'd take you in my arms and you'd put your arms around my neck, and then when we were close, you'd just forget and tell me how happy you were that I brought you back.

Think, Hagar, my love, how glorious it would be if we were together. In the morning, I'd let you sleep. You'd be so tired and happy, and when you awoke, there would be placed on the little table beside your bed some cantaloupe and eggs, and

nice steaming coffee and rolls and then you'd eat and about noon you would come down to meet me and we'd have lunch together, and you would tell me about some pretty piece of lingerie you were going to buy.

Oh, my little sweetheart, the real heaven is not up in the skies, but concealed in the lips and eyes of the one we love.

Why can't you see it? Why can't we make it real?"

He dropped his pen. What on earth was he writing! The very thing he dared not say to her, he was putting into ink. And she would read it with cold regard the next day, perhaps pass him by in the aisles with a look of superiority in her face. Yes, he could not humble himself before her, and give her the "upper hand."

He tore up the scribble, and after some minutes of indecision, started anew:

"My dear Hagar:

It is after a good deal of thought"—(at least he was on the right track. After all he would write just as he really felt)—"that I write this note to you. To-night I have realized for the first time, that I have let you carry too long the wrong opinion of me. I'm not a bad man, Hagar, though I must surely have given you that impression, when I told you that it was to be the one thing or nothing.

I don't know why I put it that way. Perhaps it was because I longed for you so when I was with you, or perhaps, though not likely, it was because I thought that was the only way to get you. At least now I am going to give you the truth of it, and I can fancy your surprise when you read what I am going to say. I can see you exclaiming, 'I wonder what's his game now.' Well, dear little friend, it isn't a game. It is simply this—I miss you, miss you terribly and I beg you to come back to me, just as a friend. And I promise you that it will be free of all the old thing entirely. Yes, Hagar, only to hear you talk and to have you to talk to. Nothing, absolutely nothing else, I swear it.

You will wonder what has come over me, wonder more I suppose what makes me say a thing which to a man of my age, and who knows the world as I do, sounds like silly rubbish. But nevertheless it is what I mean. To-night, I am filled with loathing of myself and can never again live the old life. Even as I write this it makes me happy to say it. I am so lonely, so sick of it all and am coming back to you like a penitent schoolboy. But I mean it this time. Aren't you glad?

I know you will be happy to get this and see this change that you have worked in me. I am sure, too, that we will have a lot of fun together now, in our new way.

Honestly, I never began to realize what it meant to be like this, without thinking of the other along with it. You can see what you have brought me to, little girl.

To-morrow night I'll stop for you and we'll have dinner. And then go over to Wallack's or the Broadway. Or would you rather go to the Hippodrome?

And I'll send you straight to your bungalow in fairyland immediately after. You've got to have your sleep. God bless you.

Sincerely,
BEN."

When he had finished he regarded the letter for some time, wondering at the truth that seemed conveyed in its words. After all it seemed that he really felt this way about Hagar. But it made him feel a little ashamed, and he offered to himself an explanation that it was really not true but only a clever effort to get Hagar back to him. However, as he turned the note over and over, he felt happier than he had been for months.

The next afternoon he found the following letter, poking its nose out from amidst a lot of letters whose black imprints, spoke only of dry goods and business.

He tore open the little envelope with a good deal of anticipation.

"Dear Mr. Greenfield:

I have just received your note and have slipped up here to the waiting room to answer it. I am so sorry to have to disappoint you because after all it is so nice that you understand exactly what sort of a girl I am. However, I can't help it now, because I am keeping steady company with Mr. Her-rick (you remember the man I introduced to you in the aisle one afternoon) and we are very much in love with each other.

His position won't allow us to get married just at present, but I don't feel that I ought to see anyone else because he wouldn't wish me to. But I won't ask him.

I know you'll be glad to hear I'm so happy and I am awfully sorry you didn't write that kind of a note sooner, and so I guess that we can't see each other, though of course, we can always be friends.

Sincerely yours,

HAGAR REVELLY.

P.S.—Of course it won't make any difference with my job now, will it? You said I could ask any favor of you. Anyway I know that you are a good friend and don't want to see me unhappy."

Between his finger and thumb Greenfield held it up and viewed it much as if it had been a living thing.

"Poor, foolish little girl," he muttered.

And as he remembered the swift darting messages of passion and longing that were such a part of her soft, dark eyes, he gave an unnatural, wild laugh.

For many minutes he sat numbly in the chair by his desk, quite oblivious of his surroundings — gazing ahead onto the long vista of future loneliness.

He was brought to his senses by finding that tears had gathered in his eyes.

CHAPTER XIX

It was an odd stroke of fate that at the time of Greenfield's greatest suffering from his loss, Hagar should be so deliriously happy.

She was indeed deeply in love.

The days that followed her subjection were to her still more glorious. She opened her arms to her wooer and he — pulled back the curtains that draped from his conscience, and was very happy.

How the days and weeks passed with her. The little spring-time flutter of love found a welcome haven in her soul, and one day after the other, found her as eager, as desirous, as though the dénouement had come only the day before.

Sundays and holidays usually found them seeking the shelter of the Mallorys. The little inn on the sloping bank of the Hudson had for them become transformed into a modern Arcadia. At one time it was their little chalet upon the steep incline of some Swiss mountain slope, another day the hacienda that held out its welcoming arms as they returned from a hot tramp through the prairies. And then when night came, with their backs on the cool grass and their eyes to the heavens, Herrick would pour into her ears little madrigals, that seemed to penetrate into her very heart, with their rune of love.

He could not say that for her benefit he had invested in a book of poems — "Choice Poems by Famous Poets" — or could he confess that none of the effusions were the result of the inspiration she gave him. None the less, however, did his soft words inspire her, and she often

lay enwrapped in a wondrous gaze, too happy to dare look at him.

Now and then were there days when she could not see him, for some reason of business or otherwise. These periods became hours of torture for her.

One early morning, in bed, she thought of a great plan.

And after that on the days she could not see him, her devotion was entrusted to a little china nudity about an inch in length.

At first she did not know what to name the miniature doll, thinking over several in succession. She wanted most to name it Frank, but since the little figure was to be her confidant and a receptacle for all her secrets it would never do; since all her secrets would be about Frank himself. At last she named it Bennie, absolutely forgetful at the time why the name came familiar to her ears.

So, to Bennie was entrusted many great secrets; and Bennie never betrayed the confidence. It was a wonderful help to pour into the stone-deaf ears of the little figure, her surplus of love and happiness. And for some months Bennie remained faithfully by her.

But tragedies come, disguised sometimes in the thinnest garb. One day, near the beginning of winter, the tiny figure was tramped underfoot in a crowded street car. The piece of china had fallen from her pocketbook, and in another moment, was crunched under the heavy heel of a man's shoe.

This was indeed an ill omen. For an intelligence was imparted to her, that in a moment, brought to her senses, the real importance of a secret that she had treated lightly for very many weeks.

When the little doll had fallen onto the floor, Hagar sprang quickly from her seat. And then was brought

back to it by a terrific pain that shot from the middle of her back downwards into her limbs.

She was not entirely innocent of the strange process of nature, that had gone on for quite four months. Many weeks before she had found herself growing suddenly stouter about the waist, had even to invest in a new skirt and make larger her petticoat.

But she had failed utterly to consider seriously, whether from lack of understanding or plain fear of self-revelation, the condition that confronted her. Often she had stopped to think about this new problem, and for a time would be strangely disturbed in many ways. Everything was so vaguely defined, so perplexing.

But the days had slipped by, without her even daring to tell of it the man she loved.

A few months before she had ransacked her brain for a cause, or rather an excuse for her continued condition. But that time too, had passed off and more from ignorance than anything else, she had given the trouble little concern.

Indeed one day, while at lunch, she came very near telling Herrick, but it seemed so terrible to word such a thing, such a chance of spoiling the blissful tranquillity of their association, that she let it go altogether and rather dismissed the subject from her mind.

Then another month passed, and though, as the days went by, she gained a deeper intelligence, a greater understanding of this thing that troubled her, yet her understanding of the phenomena did not grow apace with the physical proportions of it.

And as she stepped from the car, and was pierced by the pain, her only thought was of her lack of intelligence concerning herself. She told herself that she might have been injured, jerking herself in the manner she did.

She delved no further, but only muttered: "Oh, how

dreadfully ignorant I am. Just think what I might have done."

At that moment she wished she really knew *what* she might have done.

Yet her thought was never to divulge the secret or even to mention it to Herrick, as the means of protection. Somehow everything seemed all right in that direction and she reasoned that there was no need to worry. As soon as Herrick got a daily expected raise in his salary, they would be married. It would be time enough then, to tell him.

But that pain at the destruction of Bennie, somehow altered this decision, and she decided she would tell him, more to have him as a companion to share her troubles, than anything else. A thought lurked in her mind that he probably knew already and had only refrained from telling her because of fear that she might worry.

With the question definitely settled, she felt happier, and for a reason which she could not explain to herself, she decided to present herself to him that evening, in her most pleasing gown. Expecting him at eight o'clock, she left the dining table before the others had finished and rushed upstairs to dress.

But dressing did not terminate as she had thought.

Her black crêpe de chene fitted her no longer, and she could hardly wear her already altered tailored suit.

When Herrick came she was in no state to receive him. Her temper was high, she had cried, and the stains of tears were still apparent under the slight coating of powder that covered her face.

When Hagar met him in the parlor downstairs, she was so shaking with sobs, she could not look into his face.

"Dear, dear, what on earth is wrong," he begged, as he greeted her.

She could not gather enough courage to answer him. But his strong arms about her and the feel of his body near to her, was comforting, and she made a little effort to smile.

"Well," he asked patiently.

She buried her face shamedly in his arms.

"Goodness, you're queer to-night." He turned her face so that he could look into her eyes. "Now tell me what's up," he demanded, though his voice was no less kind.

For a moment Hagar looked directly at him, then clutching him around the neck she cried: "Oh, Frank, there's something—I can hardly tell you—I've known it for a long while. I've been so—so uncomfortable, dear—and I feared to tell you, because I thought you might get angry with me."

Herrick, thinking it best to pay little attention to her hysteria, placed her gently beside him on the sofa.

But Hagar's sobs were increasing in their paroxysmal gulping. She moaned steadily: "Oh, Frank, you act as if there was nothing the matter."

Raising the hands that covered her face, he said, "Now, little girl, no more of this. Tell me, what's up?" He thought for an instant. "By gracious, I did forget to kiss you."

He suited the action to his words. She drew away from him.

"Oh, it isn't that," said Hagar, between her tears. "I am—I am sick. We must get married."

Dropping her shiny, pink-tipped little fingers, as if they had been so many prongs of hot steel, he exclaimed: "What on earth are you saying, Hagar?"

In that instant, Herrick seemed to scent the cause of her hysteria.

Hagar's eyes were covered by her arms but her instinct told her that he was drawing away from her, blazing with temper.

And now she felt his cruel grasp on her wrists.

"For God's sake, tell me what you mean, Hagar," he cried.

Slowly then, he began to comprehend entirely. His answer met in silence spoke more forcibly than any word of explanation she might have offered him.

"You don't mean, Hagar, that — that —"

Staring at him, fright and fear inextricably mingled in her face, she answered him.

"Frank, you don't mean you are sorry — Oh, tell me you don't mean that."

The tears were drying in her eyes, while she pulled his head down near to her own, and ran her fingers through his soft, blonde hair. "You don't mean," she whispered, "that you're not glad."

Hagar began to understand the tumult of thought that was rushing through his senses, while Herrick, swayed by a feeling of pity, did not give vent at first to the angry vehemence of his pent-up words; but at last he could not control himself, and nearly shouted: "Do you mean to say — you are — in trouble?"

He took her by both shoulders, as if he were trying to shake the truth out of her. Then he went on. "Good heavens, is this your little game. Want to trap me — so I'll *have* to marry you?"

Hagar could only sob out his name in an imploring, begging way, while Herrick, seeming to realize he had lost his temper, now said more gently to the girl, "Why on earth — Hagar — didn't you — take better care?"

The wickedness of his words echoed into the remotest recesses of her virginal being. She looked up into his face, muttering between sobs, the while she ran her hand

over his forehead, "Why, Frank — dearie — I don't understand you."

Even at that moment, as she saw the haggardness in his eyes, she felt sorry she had told him and made him unhappy. Even she wished she had allowed everything to rest as before.

For a few minutes they sat in the little parlor, both of them staring down at the floor, each searching for an expression to their thoughts.

At last his eyes wandered to her, as quietly he said, "How long have you — been — Hagar?"

At first she tried to answer indirectly, then it appeared so difficult to speak about this hidden thing, that she could only sink back into the pillows and bury her face in her hand. Her body quivered and fluttered like a leaf, and he noticed that the hand that clung so frantically to his own was icy cold.

But now the question had become too important to be considered sentimentally.

He repeated. "Answer me, Hagar. You've got to tell me."

Conquering, only after a struggle, the terrible tide of miserable realization that had swept over her, she said: "Oh, it's been four — or five months, Frank — I don't know."

"And you never tried —" He choked his words off. "You never told me."

Then he went on relentlessly. "What were you afraid of? Afraid that I might do something, I suppose" — he was talking wildly now — "so you waited until it was too late! A nice game!"

"Thought you'd cinch our marriage? I see now what you meant about wanting a baby. . . . Oh, you're pretty cute, Hagar."

Only a few months before, their conversation had

turned onto the subject of maternity. As they spoke about it at that time, Hagar had mentioned how she would like to be the mother of his children. Now, all the words came back to Herrick's memory and he used them most vindictively.

"Yes, I suppose you wanted to be a mother," he repeated, looking hard at her.

Hagar interrupted him now, for the first time wording her inner feelings.

"Oh, Frank, for God's sake," she cried, "please — please — don't talk in this way to me. I kept it from you — because I didn't want to bother you, and because at first I didn't know what was wrong myself. I didn't dare ask anyone else, you know that. Oh, you are so mean to me now. And you say that you're not glad. Why, Frank, I thought you'd be so happy, because you loved me and we were going to get married. I thought it would mean so much more to us and would bring us closer together."

Seeing his face yield somewhat, she went on, even more desperately, with her pleading. "Why, darling, it will only mean that we must get married a few months earlier, that's all. If you are not ready on account of the factory, why, what difference can that make. I am making something and I'll get a new job if you say so, and work harder and make more money. We can live the way we are right now — until you're able to come with me."

She threw herself into his arms. "Darling, darling," she whispered, "you don't know how I love you."

But Herrick tore himself loose, impatiently telling her that she talked like a fool, that she understood absolutely nothing about what she was saying.

"Why, if I listened to you, I'll begin thinking it's the right thing, too," he exclaimed. "No, no, a thousand

times — we're in a fix, and we've got to get out of it. That is all there is to it."

She drew back aghast. He had torn himself away from her, for the first time.

"Then you don't mean that we are to get married?" she gasped.

"Yes, that's what I mean." His reply came sullenly. His face went into hard lines that were utterly new to her. "That is, not for the present. We can see later. But certainly not while this thing hangs over our heads."

With his foot he drew a chair up to the edge of the divan, and then left her side to occupy it.

"We've got to talk this thing over in a businesslike, sensible way, Hagar," he went on. "Now, tell me, do you know anyone you could go to?"

Hagar sprang up, staring at him with protruding eyes.

"Go to?"

"Yes, someone you've heard of who does —"

"Why Frank, good heavens, you don't want me —" There was a quiver in her voice that had all the fluttering hesitancy of innocence, yet the determination to fight to the very last. Her eyes flashed, her lips were pressed tightly together.

"Exactly," he said. "Do you know any place to go?"

With his persistency, she seemed to lose all her strength to battle. "I do not know of such places, Frank. Oh, God —"

Between the cries that came from her breaking heart, she explained to him now how ignorant she was of such things, how she had never considered anything but her love for him and his love for her. With deep sobs she told how she had always left the other girls when they gathered in groups, in the wash room or the cloak room

at the store, to discuss such things, and how she had always hated to hear their jokes.

Herrick listened to her, nearly frenzied by the contagion that spread to him from her wounded feelings. As she finished off her explanation, he turned away, his hands over his face, his brain in a turmoil, at the realization of her helplessness.

It would have made him braver, he realized, were she not so innocent.

"I can't believe it, I can't, I can't," he said over and over.

After a good deal of thought, during which time he paced the room back and forth, he came over and sat by her side. Very gently he began to talk to her.

"Now listen, Hagar. Of course it is of no use for us to fall out like this, and for us to get all excited is very foolish. But we can't let this go on. It would be all right, perhaps, if we were living where no one knew us. But here it is different. Supposing we should get married to-morrow. What would everybody say? Oh, yes, they wouldn't know anything — for a few months maybe. But after that it would be open news to all the world, that we had lived together before we were married. Nobody would look at us. We couldn't stay very long in one place, we'd be disgraced — that is, you'd be. And how would you like that?"

He looked into her face. And Hagar, seeing some of the old kindness in his eyes again, answered, "I wouldn't mind it, Frank, so long as I had you."

She was much surprised to find that he became somewhat angry again. Arising from his chair at her words, he walked up and down the room a half dozen times before he could calm himself.

"Hagar, why don't you understand," he implored. "Either you are so blind to the ordinary ways of the

world that you don't grasp it at all, or else, you are — well, you are more in love with me than I am with you."

"Frank!" she cried.

"I mean — more than I am capable of loving you, or anyone. Anyway you don't seem to see what people think of us. Why, just think what would happen. We'll just take the case as it stands. Say we got married. Good and well. Then a couple of months or so comes around. What then? Well, we're living in some little flat up in Harlem. Some of the fellows hunt me up, see the kid, know what's gone on. They'd know how long we'd been married. And what would they do? Can't you see?"

"Oh, Frank."

"Well, they'd accuse me of marrying you just — just because I had to" — he went on impetuously with this new idea — "not because I loved you. Can't you see? You wouldn't care for that, now would you?"

"Not very much," she faltered.

"And then maybe the boss would find it out. I would get in bad, though the worst thing they'd probably say was that I was square, and stood by you. But how would I like to hear them say that if I loved you. No, you'd get the worst of it all around. Your mother and sister would find it out too. Oh, it *would* be hell."

"I'd care very little —" Hagar started to answer.

At that moment the door opened and Miss Gillespie came in, stepping her way in precise manner up to the side of Herrick. Her thin, frail body was wrapped in a faded dressing gown, her pale freckled face, rigidly set and determined. For a time she looked slowly from one to the other without saying a word.

Then Hagar blurted out: "Frank, you remember Miss Gillespie, Mr. Herrick."

"Oh, he remembers me, little girl," said the woman.

"I've been listening. I was just passing on my way to the bathroom, when something he said stopped me. I know all that's gone on in this room for the last half hour. And from what I know," she looked bitterly into Herrick's eyes, "I don't guess I missed much."

She took hold of Herrick's arm saying: "You go now. I want to talk with Hagar."

Herrick noticed how her lips were set and in a first impulse started to follow her command. Then he stopped suddenly and said to Hagar, "Dear, has this woman any right to come into our private affairs?"

In blind submission Hagar spoke to Miss Gillespie, after only a moment's hesitation: "Miss Gillespie, couldn't you come in later on?" while Herrick noticing the influence he still possessed over the girl, turned back, encouraged by Hagar's allegiance.

But Miss Gillespie was obdurate. "I've got my hands in this affair, Mr. Herrick," she said quietly, "and the best thing all around is for you to go home without any fuss. Now, I'm talking business."

The boy stood by the side of Hagar, folding back and forth, his grey felt hat. Then he seemed to suddenly decide that here was a good chance to get rid of much responsibility. He took a step towards the door.

"Shall I go, Hagar?" he asked.

The girl looked at him with great tears welling her eyes. A sob, swelling in her throat, stifled whatever word she had wished to give him.

"Well, I'll go." Then he took her hand and held it for a moment. "Now don't worry, little girl," he said, as he went through the doorway.

Leaving the room, he closed the door behind him with rude strength, as if to show Miss Gillespie that he still had some rebellion left in him.

"God, what a cad!" said the woman, while the furniture in the room shook.

Hagar turned away from her, and leaned over the mantel, with her head buried in her arms.

Miss Gillespie walked over and raised the girl's head.

"Brace up, dear," said she, kindly. "We've got a situation to face that demands something more than tears." Half to herself she added: "And to think how I was fooled."

"It's dear of you to come in," murmured Hagar.

"Well, I couldn't stand out there hearing him bully you."

"But it isn't his fault," Hagar pleaded. "You mustn't blame him. He was right. I should have told him, I guess."

Miss Gillespie stood gazing. "Oh, you poor child, you don't blame him for anything, do you?"

"I blame myself more."

"And don't you blame him?"

Hagar dried her eyes with her tiny blue handkerchief. "Is he any more to blame than I am?" she asked softly.

"You're a fine champion for our sex," Miss Gillespie answered, letting a smile break through her face. Even Hagar had to laugh a little. But in a moment Miss Gillespie became more serious. "Yes, you think he has a right to throw all the blame on you. Well, this may be a funny world, Hagar, but you're the strangest thing I ever met. You intend letting him out of it altogether?"

"Oh, Miss Gillespie, I don't know what to do. I'm not able to think now. Everything's so terrible."

Miss Gillespie put her arms around her and drew the tearful face close to her lips.

"Dear Hagar, tell me something," she asked. "Do

you love this man, after he has told you that he wouldn't marry you?"

"He hasn't said that," she flared.

"He said quite as much."

"But not that. And I do love him. Oh, you can't know how happy we've been."

"You poor dear," whispered the woman.

"And I know how he feels with me now," Hagar continued. "Why, he isn't really the one to blame after all. I guess I should have known better. And then I don't see what this has got to do with marriage anyway. Marriage isn't just raising children. It's being altogether, and having each other all the time."

Over an hour later, after the woman had put Hagar to bed and covered her eyes with cold towels a good many times, did they again get back upon the subject.

Hagar was much quieted now while Miss Gillespie marvelled at the strange composition of this child who seemed to take her distress so easily.

"There is many a woman, Hagar," said Miss Gillespie, while she was busy over the girl, "who doesn't want to have children at first, but who would give half her life to have a child when it is too late. You see, we women get older more quickly than men, and we've got to have that little chain of flesh around their necks, or they'll forget what we've given them."

"But haven't we got as much fun from them as they have from us?" asked Hagar, earnestly.

"Child, child, do you think that marriage means only having fun?" She studied the face of the girl, then went on in a deliberate way: "Yes, I guess you do, that's what a good many children like you get married for. And how long do you think the fun lasts? Married people after a while realize that marriage means something more than fun. And pretty soon they begin

to hunt around for that something and can't find it."

Hagar thought that Miss Gillespie was settling into a discussion of the present trouble. And at her first words Hagar cried: "Oh, please, Miss Gillespie, don't let's talk of that yet. Honestly, I'm afraid I'll go to pieces if you do." Suddenly she thought of a new argument and hurried into it to keep the woman's words from forming.

"Tell me, Miss Gillespie," she asked; "why has a woman the right to make a man share something he doesn't want to share?"

"You mustn't think like that."

"But supposing," Hagar thought on, "that a man fought against—loving you as hard as he could? What then?"

"Is that Herrick's case?" asked Miss Gillespie.

Hagar answered, "Yes," remembering his stern set eyes and drawn mouth as he would leave her at night. "I know Frank loved me all along," she added. "And now I'm not going to make him so unhappy, even before we're married."

"Then you think he intends marrying you, do you?"

"Why of course. We've never spoken of anything different. This hasn't got anything to do with marriage."

Miss Gillespie walked restlessly about the room for a long time. Then she went over and turned off the gas. The full moon lit up the room with a warm yellowish glow.

"I am going to say something to you, child," she began; "I think you'll hear it better in the dark. We're not getting down to the facts. In the first place you see I haven't said a word of blame about this. And then, when I do ask you one question, you answer it by

asking me another. This is serious, so serious that you have no conception of its meaning. You are reasoning with a baby's mind and are confronted with the problem of a woman. . . . We've got to get down to the main facts. Tell me, has anyone explained to you what this means, the entrusting to you of a living thing that some day will be born to grow up into a being that lives and breathes just like you do? Has anyone ever told you that?"

"Why, no," hesitated Hagar, not knowing exactly the idea which Miss Gillespie was trying to bring out.

"Well, all right, no one has told you. So much the worse. It's a thing that they ought to teach in every school of the land. It's no disgrace to talk about it. It's life, it means happiness to you and me, and it means wrecked lives and rotten living. It's certainly more important than anything else they could teach. Well, this is how it stands." She took a deep breath. "We, in ourselves, only amount to as much as we can give — and we women have been given a mission. It is through a woman only that the world can be kept going, can be kept filled by human beings. Oh, it's a big thing, Hagar. The most glorious, God-given right in all the world, is to be able to give birth to a child. And it's a sacred thing, too, Hagar.

"Well, people don't think of this," she continued. "All the glory is taken away by the laws. But it is the only way they can do it. So they have a law that if you kill this thing, which isn't even born yet, it's murder — and they punish you for murder."

"Murder!" repeated the startled Hagar after her.

"Yes, child, murder. It's the only way they can keep people from doing things like this boy Herrick is thinking of doing. Yes, it is unfortunate that the minute you make a law, people don't settle down to think how they

are going to live up to it, but how they are going to get around it. And there you are. This glorious hal-
lowed privilege is made so that the police become the
guardian angels, instead of the Almighty Father. And
there's no two ways about it, which may be a good thing
after all. You've got to live up to the law. If you don't
you commit a crime against God and against the State,
too. Now, you don't want to be a criminal, do you, Ha-
gar?"

"Good heavens, how you scare me, Miss Gillespie, talk-
ing so hard like that," Hagar cried, grasping the woman's
hand.

"I'm telling you the plain truth."

"Then, we are committing a crime if the child isn't
born?"

"Sure."

"But supposing — that — that the police don't find it
out? Is there a way to stop it the way Frank says?"

"Yes, perhaps, but if you are caught, everybody con-
cerned goes to jail."

"Oh, how terrible, how terrible!"

"Yes, Hagar, it is terrible."

Hagar, trying hard to present the case so that in her
own eyes, there would be better opportunity to protect
Herrick, said: "But supposing, Miss Gillespie, I don't
do — this crime, what then? If I have the child, Frank
says he won't marry me."

"Hagar — you are a fool," said Miss Gillespie sternly.

Then she relented, as she saw the beautiful young face
redden, and the dark limpid eyes fill with tears. She
hugged the child to her breast.

"Don't cry, kiddie, I'm only trying to pay off a debt
— for *my* past sins, I guess," the woman said brokenly.
"You just go to sleep. I'll see you to-morrow evening
right after work. But you must remember, dearie, that

you do owe more to God than you do to Herrick or yourself. You will suffer more if you don't think of this."

It was a woeful night for poor Hagar. Maudlin dreams beset her, or else wide-awake misery, and she prayed hysterically all through the night for dawn to come. When the faint grey of morning began touching the green shade of the window, she felt as if a year's vigil had passed.

Miss Gillespie went to work quite early in the morning. And Hagar felt that another scene had been averted, for Herrick came only a few minutes after the little woman had left.

When she met him in the parlor, he took her in his arms, in a long tumultuous embrace.

"Poor dearie," he cried, guiltily, as she came into the parlor, "I was mean to you last night. But we'll fix it all up to-day, and then we'll be happy again."

"I want to be happy so badly, Frank," she said, as they stood regarding each other.

"Well, don't you worry, we'll have a lot of happy days yet. Now, I've been thinking all night, Hagar," he went on; "I suppose you have too—"

"Yes, I have. I couldn't sleep a bit all night."

"What did you think of?"

"Oh, I don't know, I pretty nearly went crazy."

"Well, it will be all over, soon. We'll just get busy right away."

She perceived in his face at that moment, a peculiar expression that frightened her.

"You mean that we—that we—should do something?" she begged.

"Yes, but don't be scared." Nearly whispering into her ear, he added: "I've got the name of three good ones to go to already."

All the anguish that had risen through Miss Gilles-

pie's words, and had tortured her through the long night, now came back, surging heedlessly through her being.

"Oh, Frank, what will they do to me? Will they hurt me?"

"Don't, kiddie," he said rather lightly; "we'll see about that when the time comes. First, I'm going to take you to see a Dr. Neugarde, and see what he says. Maybe he'll do it for us. Then it will be easy sailing. In a few days, we can go up to the Mallorys and have a celebration."

"But, Frank —" Hagar's eyes were choked with tears; she was making a valiant effort to control herself.

Herrick was kinder than ever. "Don't, old girl," he said softly. "You leave it all to me. I'll take care of you." After a moment's hesitation, he asked earnestly: "Do you love me?"

"Oh, Frank, of course."

"Well — that's all that's necessary. I'll do the rest."

His tone conveyed so much finality and decisive force, there seemed no reprieve in his words.

She did as he bade her. After a few more words, in which time Herrick was more ardent than ever before, she left him and went upstairs, and with trembling cold fingers put on her coat and hat.

"You promise to take care of me, Frank?" she begged falteringly, as she rejoined him.

"Of course, I promise."

Herrick hurried her out of the house, and they were well on the way to the office of Dr. Neugarde before he gave her an opportunity to express any more hesitation at the undertaking.

They had already alighted from the street car, and were turning a corner into the little street where the doctor lived, when Hagar clutched his arm.

"You're sure we're doing right, Frank?" she asked tremblingly.

"Why, of course, Neugarde is one of the best in town — if he will do it."

Hagar walked along silently by his side.

After some thought, she asked:

"Why shouldn't he do it, Frank?"

"Oh — he may be too busy — or want too much."

"How much will it cost?"

"Well, that is according to whom you go to. I guess if you've got a lot of money, and they know it, they'd soak you pretty good, but I won't pay more than twenty-five dollars."

"Does it cost so much as that?"

"If you go to the good ones, it does, and we won't run any chances. I'm too fond of you for that." He gave her hand an affectionate squeeze.

It was after nine o'clock before they gained admittance to Dr. Neugarde's inner office. The doctor was a man of perhaps fifty years, with heavy elliptical spectacles over his eyes and an odd semi-circular scar across his mouth and chin.

"Good morning, Dr. Neugarde," said Herrick, as he pushed Hagar into the room ahead of him.

The doctor answered quietly, "Good morning."

Being calmly scrutinized by the physician disturbed Herrick for a time, and he was very apparently at a loss for words to explain his mission.

At last he gained courage and said: "You are a specialist for women, aren't you?"

"I'm a gynecologist, yes. Take a seat," replied the physician.

Herrick started talking immediately, while Hagar sat at the doctor's side. It confused Herrick even more when

he saw the doctor's eyes roam restlessly to the face of the girl.

"Well," Herrick commenced, "I've — I've brought — my wife to see you, doctor. We are not desirous of having any children, and so we thought we would see you about it."

"How long have you been married?" the physician asked, noticing at that moment that Hagar's face became drawn and pallid.

"About a year."

"Who sent you to me?"

The physician's questions confused Herrick. He had not expected to be subjected to such an interview.

"Why, nobody, I just heard of you."

"You heard that I do this kind of work?"

Herrick was a little angered. "Oh, no, only just that you are a specialist for women."

"And nobody sent you?"

"No, sir, nobody."

"Then how did you hear of me?"

"Why, I don't know. I just inquired around. I think maybe it was in some drug store."

Dr. Neugarde rose slowly from his chair and took hold of Hagar's hand.

Very gently he asked, "What is your name?"

Herrick reddened, but did not notice the full meaning of the physician's subtle question. This was indeed a point that had been overlooked.

However, Hagar startled Herrick, even herself, by answering spontaneously, "Mrs.— Mrs. Kennedy, doctor."

The doctor turned to question her directly. There was a playful smile hovering about his mouth.

"Well, Mrs. Kennedy, how long have you been in your condition?" he asked gently.

Hagar tried to answer, but something clutched at her throat. She could only turn away and hide her face in her hands.

Herrick came over to her and said in words that were tinged with some anger, "Now don't give way to yourself this way, Hagar." Then to the doctor, he said: "We don't know exactly. It has been several months."

"And you didn't think of such a thing as this before?"

Hagar started to reply, but Herrick was the first to speak, blurting out: "Sure, doctor, I told her about it all the time — but we just neglected it, that's all."

The physician walked over to Herrick's side.

"Well, young man," he began, "take the dear little wife back to your home and thank God you're so lucky!"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean — that you are a lucky boy to have such a beautiful girl for a wife." He looked kindly at Hagar.

Herrick showed his perplexity. "Then you won't do anything, doctor?"

The physician turned on him angrily. "Why, absolutely not."

"But it's all right. We're married."

"I don't question you."

"Then I can't see why you refuse. I'll pay twenty-five dollars cash."

A sudden thought seemed to come to Herrick's mind, now. "Doctor, it isn't because it is too late, is it?"

The doctor's face relaxed somewhat from its former sternness.

"Well. It is probably pretty late to do the kind of despicable business about which you have approached me. However, so far as that goes, for me, my young friend, it is always too late. I don't dabble in this kind of business."

"You mean if there was danger of her losing her life, you wouldn't do it?"

The doctor asked Hagar to stand up, and for a moment he studied her well-rounded hips and full bust.

After only a moment's scrutiny, he said: "I think I can easily say, without further examination, that she'll have no trouble."

"Then there is no more to do?" questioned Herrick.

Dr. Neugarde smiled. "Yes, young man — get out of my office." He walked over and opened the door for them, then went back to his desk and engaged himself in some work.

There was a moment spent in contemplation, and Herrick sulked out of the room, dragging Hagar with him.

They were dismissed. And Herrick's temper was not cooled by the interview.

"I wonder if the old fool knew," he said to Hagar, as they gained the street. Then, "Oh, I guess he did, but never mind."

Hagar ventured the information that perhaps they had not offered enough, while Herrick took a slip of paper from out his pocketbook. He showed her the first of three names he had written upon it.

Mrs. H. D. Delabar,
Midwife.
— Second Ave.

Hagar, with increased alarm, saw him study the address.

A fresh surging of fear swept over her. She pulled at his arm, crying, as she held back: "Oh, Frank, for God's sake, I can't go, I can't, I can't. Didn't you see the doctor? He knew, and I can't, I won't, because it is a terrible crime."

Herrick looked at her with a glance that presaged the losing of his temper.

"Miss Gillespie has been talking to you, I suppose," he answered.

"She told me a good deal," affirmed Hagar.

"Then you care more for Miss Gillespie than you do for me, do you?"

His argument bore home. Reluctantly, feebly, but without a protest, she dragged along by his side, like a little old woman, until they reached the number on Second Avenue.

"You wait here until I take a look at the place," he said, disappointedly, as they found the business abode of Mrs. Delabar to be a decrepit two-story brick building, ready at any moment to tumble to the ground.

"I won't make out why I came at first," he said. "I will just ask her a few questions. I can tell by that if it is all right."

Leaving her standing on the sidewalk, fearsome and wondering, he went up the dingy stairway. About Hagar were a half dozen dirty-faced children, playing like little kittens in the gutter.

In a moment he came back.

"I believe it is all right. I'm not struck with the looks of the place, but the woman talked as if she knew her business."

Automatically Hagar followed his bidding. Slowly they ascended to the second story of the delapidated building, first having to go back through a long hallway, that had on one side a combination butcher-shop and grocery store, and on the other side a Chinese laundry.

When they reached the top of the stairway, a tall, gaunt negress ushered them into a little reception room. Mrs. Delabar didn't come in for a few minutes and Herrick went over to the window while Hagar sat down immediately

under a nervous, chirping canary, that flitted back and forth in its little prison cage.

Soon Mrs. Delabar came in.

She too, was very thin and surveyed the pair suspiciously.

"Mrs. Delabar, we've come to see you in regard to my wife," began Herrick—rather decisively this time.

The woman only looked at him silently. Herrick went on: "And we thought we'd come and see you about the case. I was told that you are competent."

The woman's eyes seemed to brighten, but there was a dulness, a sadness in them that spoke of a fire long extinguished. Just as she was to answer Herrick, a little crippled youngster with a bright, happy face and curly hair, ran into the room.

"S-sh, go back to the kitchen," whispered the woman, as she patted the child on the head. Then she turned to Hagar and Herrick, and said, "Hip-joint disease, poor child." When the door was shut after the boy, she rejoined them, saying, "I'm sorry to interrupt you. Please go on."

"Oh, that's all right," Herrick replied, still retaining his positive manner. "We only wanted to *see* you about it now, find out what you'd charge, and so forth."

"That's according to the length of the confinement, and how much you want me to do afterwards," replied Mrs. Delabar—hesitating to start first on the money part of the agreement.

Herrick spoke up, "Oh, we'd want you to go right ahead with it until everything was all right."

"Well," said the woman, "I'm not so busy now, and would like to have the case very much. My time isn't very full for the next three or four months, so whenever you expect to be ready, you could let me know."

"Why,— we're ready now, right away," the boy exclaimed earnestly.

The woman surveyed Hagar closely, apparently puzzled at Herrick's words.

"Dear child," she then said to Hagar, "you mustn't lace so tightly. You hardly show a sign."

"Oh, I'm only — it's still a few months before —" Hagar confessed with a desire to show that she was not so ignorant as the woman probably thought.

Though neither Hagar nor the boy beside her understood the strange manner that came over the woman at this moment, they did not have to wait long for elucidation.

She turned to Herrick with set jaws.

"I thought you said you expected the time right away?"

"I meant we were ready," he answered.

"So — you wanted me to do a criminal abortion? Is that it?"

Herrick winced as she spoke the name, and at her lack of delicacy in expressing it.

"We want to have the matter attended to right away," he said firmly. "We were afraid my wife wasn't strong enough to have a child."

"Well — you'll have to go elsewhere." Mrs. Delabar's eyes were bright with anger. Arising, she went over and opened the door, and at the same time, said, with a little bitterness in her voice, "Thank God, my hands are clean, even if my pocket book is empty."

Hagar had walked quickly out into the little landing of the stairway.

But Herrick hesitated, as if he wished to debate the question with her.

"You've struck the wrong place, young man," the woman went on, as he hesitated to leave. "You'll find a lot who will do it. There are a lot of people who make

their living doing this thing. It's making New York into a hell-hole. And they've got police protection too. But whoever sent you here, sent you to the wrong place. Good day, sir."

And again, they were dismissed.

Going down the steps, Herrick thought to himself: "I should have asked her the names of those other places."

But he fished back into his pocket book for the little slip of yellow paper.

"We're having some time, aren't we?" he said to Hagar, with a laugh.

"I'll only go to one more place," she murmured. Her tone rang cold, full of bitterness and despair. "I'm sick of this disgusting business."

Herrick counselled her to be calm, saying that theirs was only a duty that lay on ahead of many hundreds of men and women each day. Reluctantly she gave in to him.

They approached the second midwife, a stout colored lady, on Third Avenue.

The interview was short, very short.

"I'm willing to do the business, but not on a case so far advanced," she told them. "I've got to look out for number one. I'm sorry, sir, but it's too late, and you won't find anybody else — that's got any sense."

In a frenzy of disappointment, Herrick dragged the girl across the alley-like street, through the throngs of drunken men and ragged anæmic women, to the third place, the last on his list.

And they received the same answer.

The woman, nearly a counterpart of Mrs. Delabar, "would be glad to do it, but it was too late."

"Then what are we to do?" begged Hagar, as they stumbled along the sidewalk.

"Oh, we'll find somebody," he replied, somewhat hope-

lessly. "I guess a thing like this has got to be done in a hospital."

They walked the entire way home, both overwhelmed by the calamity that now engulfed them, though in Hagar's mind lay a thought that she was thankful for the turn events had taken.

"He'll know now that I was at least willing to do as he asked," she kept saying to herself.

It was nearly noon when they reached her steps and as Herrick was obliged to hurry back to the factory, she trudged alone up the stairway, immersed in a feeling of isolation and despair.

On reaching her room, she found a little white envelope laying face upwards on her dressing table. She opened it quickly and searched for the signature. It was from Miss Gillespie. She read:

"Dear Hagar:

I could not get you over the telephone, and so am sending this note by special messenger. Don't come near the store until I see you. If you do, Greenfield will question you, and make you think I told him all. However, he knows absolutely nothing, though I have had a quarrel with him and have given up my position. See you to-night.

MABEL GILLESPIE.

P.S.—You have a very bad cold, understand. And don't you dare to leave the house."

In vain Hagar cast about for explanation of the note. It was nearly impossible for her to await the evening.

What had Miss Gillespie told Greenfield? And why was she leaving her position? If they hadn't talked about her, why should Miss Gillespie have any fear that he would question her?

Mingled ire and curiosity flooded her senses. It was a relief indeed when Miss Gillespie came home from the store

that night. Her first question of Hagar was to know if the note had been received.

"I didn't see you at the store," she said; "but I wasn't sure."

"I got it," answered Hagar, "but I don't understand it."

Then Miss Gillespie related her entire interview with Greenfield. She had gone to him utterly unable to control a desire to censure him for putting Hagar in the way of enticing things. She had not meant to give him the idea that there was any trouble, but in a moment of anger he had turned on her, accusing her of keeping Hagar away and of telling her that he was not the right company. Then what could she do? She thought she could not dare to tell him the real reason for Hagar's staying away — so she let him believe that he had struck the right explanation.

"One word brought another, Hagar," Miss Gillespie went on, "and at last he told me I could leave on the 15th, so there you are. I'm out of a job."

Hagar thought a long time, at last saying, "Well, I'm awfully sorry, of course. But I don't see what right you had to discuss my affairs with Greenfield — or anyone else."

Of a sudden, a remorseless anger appeared to have shot up in her. Completely ignoring her benefactor, Hagar walked angrily back and forth across the room.

"Why Hagar, you don't feel that way against me, do you?" asked Miss Gillespie.

All the pent-up emotions, the disappointments she had suffered, the product of her agonizing, withering experience, now came forth in a torrent of words.

"Yes," she went on, "that's the way I feel. You've put ideas in my head that spoiled everything between Frank and me. I would have submitted to whatever he

wanted me to do, and now since I know more about it — I can't — my God, I can't. And he's so unhappy, and I am unhappy, and you've lost your job, all because of it. You're always preaching and talking rotten stuff. Good heavens, why couldn't you leave a thing that's bad enough, alone. Now look what you've done by your meddling."

Miss Gillespie took her by the shoulders.

"You've been out to-day, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have," replied Hagar bravely.

"And you found out — that it's — too late, haven't you?"

Hagar shook her head, and less defiantly, faltered, "I think so."

"I thought as much."

Then Miss Gillespie, in a very quiet way, told what her plans had been.

"I don't know just what to say to you about this, Hagar," she continued. "But I'm going to tell you now, why I tried to make you see all that was good and holy. It was that I knew that it was too late. And that was one reason why I didn't want you to leave the house to-day. I didn't want him to get hold of you. To my mind that seemed the best way of making you understand. It would take a longer time than we've got to get you to see the sacredness of it. So I just made up my mind to have you hold out against the possibility of getting this information. He would have stayed by you then, I'm sure of it. But now —"

"What — now —"

"Well, now he's heard them tell you the truth of it, and I don't dare to think what he might do."

"You think he *won't* marry me now?"

"I think — more than that —" came the answer. "Oh, why did you leave the house to-day?"

Hagar understood more fully now the meaning of Miss Gillespie's suspicions.

Late that night, after Hagar had waited over three hours for Herrick to keep his word and come to her, there came instead, by special messenger, a short note. In the envelope was twenty-five dollars. The note said that there had been some words with the boss at the factory and as they were reducing his salary anyway, he had decided to leave. He had heard of another job in a small town in Michigan, and he was leaving that night because there was a chance of losing it if he didn't get there right away. He hoped everything would be all right and was glad to do the square thing by her and leave her the twenty-five dollars. She must not hesitate to use it.

Miss Gillespie sat up the night with her.

In the morning a doctor came, procured through the landlady's young son, and pronounced the attack as one of typical hysteria, which sometimes, for no apparent reason attacked girls of about her age. It was probably due to nervous exhaustion accompanied by some indiscretion of diet.

Three days later, Miss Gillespie moved Hagar and herself into another boarding house, an old brick building on Second Avenue, near Twentieth Street.

Through the loquacity of Queolla LaMotte, all the boarders knew the real order of things, and so she thought it best that they both leave now, of their own accord. Realizing also that Greenfield's scrutinizing eye would be more alert than ever, she persuaded Hagar to give up the position at Rheinchild's. And as Hagar saw that she must do this anyway before many weeks passed, she readily gave in to the older woman's wishes.

Another event, which did not altogether displease Hagar was to be told by her undiscerning mother, when she visited her on the second day of her residence in the new

boarding place, that Mr. Nealy had procured a very good position in Poughkeepsie, as the editor of an evening paper, and that she had thought it over and decided for the sake of companionship, to also take up her residence in that city. She would leave in another week, and open a refined boarding place; through Mr. Nealy it would not be long before she could do even better than she was doing in New York. Hagar would take all her vacation there, and run up now and then on Sundays.

She told Hagar how she had written a letter to the professor many weeks before, saying that she did not want him to send any longer the entire monthly allowance of seventy-five dollars.

In the dim twilight that evening, the mother told the daughter of future plans; while the child, her mind full of her own troubles, felt that she must get away quickly or else through weakness divulge to the mother the hidden secret.

CHAPTER XX

GREENFIELD received Hagar's written resignation without a word of remonstrance. She had thought that he would perhaps send a note to her at least, might even come himself to find out the trouble. Indeed, so curious was Hagar to ascertain whether he had done this, she called up the old boarding-place. But no word had been received, and when Miss Gillespie secured for her a position at Macy's, there was in her acceptance of it a certain spirit of revenge for his apparent indifference to her.

Meanwhile, Miss Gillespie had found it not so easy to obtain a position for herself. Feeling she could not go backwards in her progress, she soon realized it was only in this manner that she would be able to procure anything. The field was rather limited at this season of the year, and even had she been willing to take a smaller salary, she could not obtain a position with anything like the amount of responsibility to which she had been accustomed.

After nearly an entire week spent in a fruitless search, she entered into correspondence with the Chicago branch of a New York firm, and at last, when this seemed the only thing left for her to do, she accepted the position.

It was a woeful task for Hagar to see the kind woman board the train at the Pennsylvania Station. When the thin figure disappeared into the tunnel-like stairway leading down to the tracks, Hagar felt as if it were she, and not Miss Gillespie, who was being swallowed up and taken away.

Until the rear lights of the train entered the tunnel,

Hagar stood peering down between the black iron bars, while surging over her was an intensified sensation of unsatisfaction, of loss, and great sadness.

Walking over Thirty-second Street to the Broadway car, her face pale, her eyes glancing far ahead, Hagar's thoughts went back many times to the little freckled face woman. When she reached her home, and realized for the first time that she was actually alone, there seemed nothing else left for her to do but to cry. And in rather a methodical fashion, she undressed and went to bed, with a yellow paper-backed novel she had found in the writing room at the store and a plentiful supply of handkerchiefs.

Each day became a separate ordeal after that. Her position at Macy's was an unpleasant one, since she must sit confined in a sort of cage and make the change that came to her in little rubber-capped brass boxes. The puffing of the air-tubes and the sudden shooting out of the rubber-padded cases, continually startled her. Then there was none of the freedom, none of the feeling of ownership, that had been hers when at Rheinchild's.

Many times as she sat in her little wire house, she would wish that she might be back in her old position. She would even think that she had acted wrongly in doing as Miss Gillespie had told her, and once when thinking in this fashion, she asked of herself if Miss Gillespie had not made her do this just to get even with Mr. Greenfield.

The days dragged slowly. She had been in the new position about six weeks when she found she could not longer meet the inquisitive glances of the girls about her. Whenever she went into the wash-room, always there would be a half dozen or more giggling youngsters ungalantly screwing themselves through the crowd, passing hushed comments here and there.

Even at the boarding-house it was nearly as bad. She had to lie and smirk at every step, telling the landlady,

who had a bigger heart than was apparent at first acquaintance, that her husband was ill in the West, and out of a position; that he had been on a big surveying scheme that had fallen through and would not be able to get back for two or three months. She was surprised to find how easily she told the story which Miss Gillespie had spent a whole evening in framing.

But never before had she encountered such a period of loneliness as was now her lot. Her mother's letters from Poughkeepsie and occasional letters from the unhappy Miss Gillespie in Chicago did not fill the gap made when they had left her.

One evening she walked the entire length of Riverside Drive up to One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, and with every step she took there seemed to be presented a new angle to her misery. She walked until her legs and back ached her so she could no longer stand the pain; then she sank into a bench alongside the road, with the realization that it was not many months before when she had been so happy in nearly the same place, with her mother and Mr. Nealy. She reached home about eleven o'clock, and as she dragged herself up the stairway, her legs felt as if they were hot coals, and her back a thing of glass.

The nights were the hardest to bear. Where formerly she was at least sure of seeing Miss Gillespie, or Herrick, or her mother when she wished her, she was now compelled to stay in her room. One evening she spent sitting on the stoop downstairs with the other boarders. But their glances made her so unhappy, she never again went near their nightly gathering.

Her only real diversion was a moving picture establishment about a block away. And, after she had discovered the place, she was almost a nightly visitor.

Nearly every evening she would pay the small fee and

then occupy some seat in the last row. After a time, she began to feel that one of these seats was being reserved for her, as often she found one of them vacant, when the rest of the hall was comfortably filled.

At least, it was a good pastime for her, and her grasping mind made alive the heroes and heroines of the shadowed canvas. Many times would tears come into her eyes when some engrossing love scene was depicted; and when the lovers were at last happily united in each other's arms, she would come out of her trance to find herself sobbing with joy.

Hagar found that a bond of kinship existed between herself and the other "regulars" of the picture show. A speaking acquaintanceship sprung up between herself and a half dozen others as she continued to visit the place. They were all women, and they usually sat in the last row; most of them came alone and only seldom did she see them in company with some man or some other woman.

One night she stopped to speak to a woman, a good deal past her own age, who for the last few times had been sitting next to her.

"I see you nearly every night," said Hagar. "Do you always come so often?"

"Oh, yes. There is nothing else to do."

The woman asked Hagar where she lived and when Hagar told her, the woman begged her to call sometimes. She lived only a block away.

"I come here about every other night," she went on. "I've got a man, but we can't be seen out together. He's married, you know." She gave a sad, weary smile.

In one way or another Hagar came to understand that a moving picture show was an institution that harbored many lonely women. The back row was always filled and she would often wonder if their story was the same as that

of the woman she'd met. As she kept on visiting the place, she came to feel that the air of mystery that hung about these silent, lonesome people was a thing to be sought for, and when, after a time she came to have a nodding acquaintance with most of them, her childish mind put her too, in this charmed circle.

In only a few weeks Hagar felt it a solemn duty that she appear in her usual seat in the last row.

A great change had really taken place in her since Miss Gillespie's departure. No longer was she the innocent, eager child that had confronted Greenfield, or who had become so embittered towards Nealy.

It seemed that something in her had broken, as if she were a big bubble that had been pierced by some sharp instrument. She felt so little interested now in the things that interested other people. Everything appeared rather useless. When she would become excited over some passing thing, she would feel a little ashamed of herself for having the emotion.

This period of resignation lasted until about a month before the expected event. Then there came, quite suddenly, it seemed, a gradual metamorphosis. She became awakened, without being able to account for it, and found herself stimulated by the things that previously had made her resigned and submissive.

One night, standing in front of the mirror, she found as she regarded herself, that she was possessed of a fierce desire to get over her trouble, and be pretty and young again. After that night, the quest for freedom and happiness was the dominating influence that made her enter into each day with a nearly frenzied desire for further enduring.

And now she would walk along the street, shutting her eyes and gritting her teeth at the perilous facts that awaited her. Terrible, strange sensations, would again

and again nearly force her into the most abject periods of despondency. But it only made her fight more grimly. She found the only way to battle against these weaker moments was to set her teeth and repeat over and over again in her thoughts: "I am going to live — I am going to live — I am going to live."

The advisability of sending for some one often came to her mind. She had so little money, there was only about thirty dollars left in the Adams Bank where she kept her deposit, and each day was eating steadily into that. She wished a good deal that Miss Gillespie was in New York, and even thought she would write to her mother, who was now so happy in Poughkeepsie, and tell her everything.

But a picture of their meeting, and all the wrath and censure would quickly dismiss the idea. Even telling Greenfield was considered, but that showed itself to be out of the question — since he knew nothing of her dilemma, it seemed very foolish to inform him.

The only one to whom she could turn was Thatah, and Hagar fully decided to send her a note in the next few days, begging for an interview. Of course, Thatah hated her, but she couldn't really blame her, and there seemed no way out of it.

As she thought it over, it appeared she must be able to endure the humiliations for the benefit to be gained. Thatah could loan her a little money until she was able to get back to work.

However, she put off sending for her sister until the doctor should give her a definite period.

The darker days crept on quickly.

She gave up her position in Macy's and now spent the time in her room, sitting and waiting in a vague, bewildered way, full of suspense and dread.

One morning, after a long time spent in hesitation she wrote the letter asking Thatah to come.

It was a dark, gloomy day, and at noontime, Hagar felt so restless and uneasy, she sought her bed. An odd feeling of lassitude hung over her, and a little later in the afternoon she felt so ill, she called in the young physician to whom she had spoken about her case.

The doctor came and comforted her a good deal by telling her there was no need to worry, that it was many days before she need be watchful, and that she was only suffering from nervousness and apprehension.

For this information, she handed him a dollar and a half. However, she felt that he was not giving her case enough importance, or else that he was really worried and only put the matter lightly so that she would not be aware of it. She wished that she could have afforded a more expensive physician.

Hagar was hardly settled in bed that night, after a meal which had been brought up from the dining room, when a great discomfort overcame her. At five o'clock, the next morning, the child, a boy, was born to her.

CHAPTER XXI

THE child was hardly three weeks born, before Mrs. Kempfest, the landlady, inquired of Hagar about the payment of the accumulated board money.

This was a difficult situation to face for the girl, as Thatah had paid no attention to her note, and there having been some signs of inflammation that necessitated her remaining in bed for a time longer than the usual period, every bit of money had been given to the doctor to make him continue his visits.

"I must inquire, Mrs. Kennedy, as to who will pay me my board money," said the woman, as she stood in the shadow of the doorway. "It is already three weeks, and I never wait for more than a week for anybody."

Hagar was lying quietly in bed. Arousing herself slowly, she asked, as if she had not heard, what was the trouble.

The woman repeated the object of her visit.

Hagar drew herself up on the pillow, her face still flushed with fever.

"Please, please, Mrs. Kempfest," she begged, weakly, "don't worry me now. I'll be better in a few days, and you won't lose anything."

Standing on the threshold of the door, with her red hands on her hips, and a very stern expression about her mouth and eyes, the woman regarded Hagar for some time, and then, with mumbled words to herself, abruptly left the room and went down the stairway.

That evening Hagar wrote another note to Thatah, again begging her to come.

"Ask for Mrs. Frank Kennedy," she wrote. "I am sick in bed. Please come, please." It was a discordant whisper of despair that Hagar penned on the white paper.

Then she called down to Mrs. Kempfest, asking that someone come up to take the letter. One of the women, with whom she had formed something of a friendship, came up, after over an hour of waiting. But it was only to hear again repeated in her ears, as if in payment for the errand, the intelligence that no one had called on her since she had been sick, and that everybody was remarking about it.

It was suspicion again, but the full importance of the woman's remark did not penetrate into poor Hagar's understanding, until the woman was well down the stairway. Then she called her back.

"I want you to understand," Hagar emphasized, "that my husband — that my husband is on a surveying trip, and if you knew anything about it, you'd know that they stay away from civilization for months at a time."

"I am sorry, child," said the woman quietly, noticing in Hagar's face an unhappiness that for all the child's harsh words made her feel kindly toward her.

To Hagar's great surprise, Thatah came up very early the next morning. The milkman had just left his bottles at the bottom of the stairs, and as she came softly up the stairway, the rattle of his cart was mingled in her steps. Thatah had an opportunity to come into the room even, without Hagar being aware of it.

A cheerless sight met Thatah's eyes. Hagar, whom she had thought so lucky, lay in the bed, her head buried in a heap of soiled white blankets, her body outlined by a curved ridge in the covering.

The room smelled illy, as of clothing drenched by rain, or the stale smell of hair and bristle. On the floor was spread a worn bit of rug; on the window, as though bur-

dened by some human effort, were two geranium plants struggling for existence in the foul atmosphere.

It was dark in the room, and Thatah's eyes did not penetrate to the bed and its occupants with anything more than a casual glance, until her eyes swept past nearly every other object; the bits of ribbon that lay scattered on the bureau, a broken toilet bottle, a waterbag, a bit of hair puffing, a dejected-looking silk hairnet hanging carelessly on the arm of the gas jet.

Then she saw the huddled mass in the bed.

She began slowly. "Hagar, the woman downstairs — told me to come right up — what —"

But now she perceived something more. A frantic cry arose from her heart, and formed into terror as the words came from her lips.

"Hagar, oh, Hagar, what on earth has happened to you!"

Hagar, thinned, gaunt looking, turned a white, tear-stricken face towards her sister. A great fear had her in its grasp.

She tried to answer, but there was in her throat a spasmodic gripping that held the cords inarticulate. It was only with a blank, incomprehensible stare that she could return Thatah's words.

At last, after hovering between fear and shame, she managed to say: "Forgive me, Thatah — I had no one else to send for."

Then she gave a wild cry as she burst on: "Oh, Thatah, how glad I am you've come. I don't know what would have happened to me if you hadn't."

"I wish I had known," said Thatah. "I was away in a horrid position in the White Mountains for nearly three months, and just came home last night. Oh, I wish I had known."

It is difficult to say how Thatah first noticed the child.

For the first time in nearly a week, it had lain absolutely quiet and, in the darkened room, its slight movement of breathing was not discernible. It was while Thatah was taking off her coat and hat, that she gave a sudden stop and ran over to the bed, while she forcibly turned Hagar's face toward her.

Though intense feeling and surprise was pent up within Thatah, the words came softly, even sweetly to Hagar who had expected a torrent of abuse from her.

"Hagar, you — are — a mother!" Thatah exclaimed.

But she did not speak harshly and the kindness of those words was the first tonic that had come to Hagar in all the heart-aching days.

For just a moment Hagar hesitated, then she took hold of Thatah's hands and drew them down to her face in a begging plea of forgiveness.

"Oh, Thatah, you're so good, so good, not to scold me," she cried. "Tell me, you'll stay by me. Tell me that first before you say another word." Then as Thatah, who was too rapt in surprise, in consternation at her sister's plight, failed to answer, Hagar went on, half raising herself in bed, and saying in a voice that burrowed to the very depths of Thatah:

"Oh, sister, you've got to stay by me. You don't know what I've gone through the last few weeks. You mustn't forsake me. You're the only one I can turn to. You will, dearie, you will, won't you?"

And then her tears flooded more, though now from gratitude, for on Thatah's face was a smile, tender and forgiving.

"Of course, sister, I'll stand by you," answered Thatah, who looked steadily into Hagar's eyes. Going on gently, she said: "After all, there's nothing to forgive — if — if — you loved him."

"Oh, for you to say that, Thatah," cried Hagar.

Thatah turned away to conceal her emotions.

"And you won't ever tell on me?"

"I'll never tell any one, Hagar."

"Oh, I don't believe it's true," whispered Hagar.

"I've been nearly crazy thinking about what you would do when you came."

In disconnected sentences, full of anguish, Hagar now told of all her trials, relating how Nealy had dragged her through the aisle of the store, when she refused to leave; the faithlessness of Herrick, the goodness of Miss Gillespie. They talked and confided, and Thatah, after a time, even related a little of how monotonous had been her own existence.

"But I haven't seen it—" exclaimed Thatah, in the midst of their confidences. "Please—" and she bent fondly over the little pink face projecting, like a hidden berry, from out the folds of blankets and quilts. Hagar uncovered the little long head.

"I couldn't look at him for three days," Hagar confessed, as she watched Thatah.

"How awful, Hagar," cried Thatah. "Why he's a dear."

"And you don't blame me, Thatah, you don't blame me at all?" begged Hagar after Thatah had put the child back among the blankets.

"Hagar, if you loved him and you thought he loved you, how — how can I blame you? There is nothing more glorious that I can imagine. And though you were young and foolish, you lived up to your understanding of affection, and — why I envy you. I wouldn't want to be blamed."

"But Thatah, you don't think I did wrong?"

"Oh, let's not discuss it now. I've got views, I guess they're strange ones."

"They are strange, sister — some people would say you are a bad woman to think like that."

Thatah smiled. "You don't think I'm a bad woman?" Hagar seemed hurt by her remark.

"Thatah, how can you ask that — when you have been so good to me! Of course not."

"We've been separated a year or more, Hagar," continued Thatah. "In that time I've thought over and over again that just this thing — the thing that's befallen you, was the most glorious thing that could happen to anyone." She looked away from Hagar for a moment, saying in a voice full of yearning — "Just to be purely a material thing, without laws, anything — just to be a human being in the way God made you, because you wanted to be that way —" Her eyes dimmed a little.

"Thatah," said Hagar, grasping her sister's arm, "you're being so strange."

Thatah smiled and went on. "You see, sister, I'm not bitter and hard. It's because I've thought so much about this thing. Yes, I've thought this, repeated it over and over to myself, wished it in the face of marriage even, when I thought that marriage put a damper on one's truer self. . . . Oh, I've thought this when I was sitting in the room watching father read and smoke, I've thought of this when I looked down into the backyard next door, with the feeling that I would like to throw a looking glass or a water pitcher down there on the cement pavement, just to wake up somebody, just to startle myself even.

"No, you oughtn't to feel so bad about it, Hagar. You ought to be even a little proud, and hold your head up bravely in front of the world."

"Oh, how beautiful, for you to talk that way," Hagar cried, finding for the first time some vindication in her misfortune.

"Well, it's got deep meaning, I guess," said Thatah.

"I think a good deal just like this. You would too, if you lived alone."

Then she took Hagar's extended hand, saying: "Why, I've known a man over a year, and though he is much older than I am, and it probably would not hurt anything, yet I have never let him kiss me even, though he has often wanted to do it out of pure fatherliness. And when he was close to me, I would have given anything on earth, if I had cared enough for him, to have wanted him to do it. After all, there is not much difference."

"I know," exclaimed Hagar. "I've felt that way, too."

"So, the only thing that is worth while is to be truthful to yourself. That's what it comes to," Thatah went on.

"Oh, Thatah, you're a wonderful woman—I never knew," interrupted Hagar, with reverence in her voice.

They talked for a long while. Thatah experienced great pleasure in fondling the infant, and as Hagar saw the eyes of her older sister become bright as she handled the baby, a feeling stole over her that she, too, ought to feel this way.

After a time, Thatah rose to go, with a promise to return at night. But Hagar grasped her hand, begging her to stay longer.

"Oh, please, sister, don't leave me; it's so good to have you. Please don't go." Then she repeated again, "I can't understand why you are so kind to me. I thought you hated me."

Thatah stood looking down at the pale little face in the bed. "Why should I?" she asked.

"Because—because I've done so wrong, I guess."

In a flame of gratitude, Hagar kissed the long narrow hand that stroked her forehead, while Thatah only smiled, and felt that for the first time she, too, was beginning to

understand this strange thing she had been trying to express.

Hagar held her hand tightly, as if possessed of a fear that Thatah would forsake her, and to keep her from leaving, she spoke about the first thing she could think of — how insensible she had been to Herrick's advances and slyness.

"Slyness," Thatah interrupted. "Didn't he love you?"

Hagar looked at her with downcast eyes, saying, "I'm afraid I loved him more than he loved me."

A little hysterically she put her arms around Thatah's neck, and as Thatah bent over her, cried bitterly, "Oh, I'm such a fool, sister — such a fool!"

Hagar related to her now, the story of the whole affair, and this time she gave Greenfield his share of the blame.

"I blame him for putting that strange understanding in me," Hagar went on. "Miss Gillespie was right. It was he who made me realize for the first time how good it was to be loved, and have somebody hold you close. And though I never wanted *him*, yet I couldn't help seeing how good it would be if I really loved somebody the way he said. Then Frank came just at the right moment, I guess."

Hagar continued the story, telling how it didn't seem to be the same thing when Herrick was with her, because he never worried her by proposing anything that had to do with their intimacy.

"I guess Greenfield was squarer with me than he was. He told me right out and out," she added.

Before Thatah left, the room was put in order, the window opened wider; Hagar had given her the address of the doctor, and Mrs. Kempfest was called in and made to understand that she should not worry about the rent.

Though it had been a strange interview, this conversa-

tion with Hagar was the first break Thatah had experienced in many months of undiversified monotony.

Something human, real, had come in her path, and the words of daring opinion that came to her lips, or the feeling of exultation, that filled her as she walked to the office, were part of some inner feeling of defiance and revolution that she could not name nor even understand.

Why had she talked so kindly to Hagar? Why, in walking up those squalid steps to Hagar's room, had a feeling of kindness for Hagar permeated her being. Had she not expected to find the girl in trouble? Surely she had known that Hagar was in dire circumstances, else would she have been called?

As Thatah reasoned with herself, she saw that it was because she understood the child's utter blamelessness, even helplessness, that she had been so benevolent. She knew the inheritance that had been handed her. It was her mother, not Hagar, she decided, who was to be blamed.

Thatah was overwhelmed by the fact that this zest for truth in life should so fill her that she should see no wrong in Hagar's predicament. The days for her had been so colorless, so lacking in anything that would disturb the galling monotony.

That day Thatah found it very difficult to keep to her work. Hagar's troubles seemed to act like a stimulant. For a time she was really at a loss to know whether it was Hagar, or the new-born child, that brought to her this feeling of exhilaration.

As she sat at the side of Graveur she was enveloped by many recollections. Her employer would talk to her of business details, while her mind dwelt amongst the days and nights of the year that had passed; he talked to her of singers and contracts, things which had formerly interested her intensely, and she only thought of the ghastli-

ness of her life; recollecting how she had wondered during those lonely nights, if she was always to be so unhappy.

She remembered a day that she had pleaded illness to him, so that she might go home and sit by the window and plan some way out of it. And after that, when she began to feel that there was no way out, she remembered how she had likened herself to a prisoner.

There was rebellion that day in Thatah. Her body, her mind and soul became permeated by it, and she never before felt so ashamed of the emptiness of her existence. "Not a thing in it that counted, not a feeling or an emotion that mattered," she kept thinking to herself. The only thing she was proud of was her allegiance to her father.

Graveur was puzzled by her mood. He thought she looked prettier somehow, too, for he saw now color in her formerly pale cheeks, and a look of desire in her eyes of which he had never before been conscious.

"Thatah," he said, after they had shut the lid of his desk, "I have watched you all day — and I have discovered something."

"What?" she asked.

He hesitated.

"Well, to explain myself, I must go back a little. You know I used to watch you a good deal, and after you'd been here some months, I decided that you were a cold, passionless individual, who neither thought of anything emotional nor cared about it. And now to-day, I have been watching you again and I seem to see that I have been mistaken."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, that you've got all this human understanding, all the feeling — but that, must I say it — that you are simply a good woman and fight it out."

"So you think I'm good, Mr. Graveur?" she asked, wondering at the similarity of their thoughts.

"Yes, I'm sure of it."

"And—do you think I deserve any credit for it?"

"Now that's a question," he answered, with a smile. "So many people deserve no credit at all for being good, because they don't know. It takes temptation to make one good—because then they have something to resist. A person that's good just because there is nothing else to do surely deserves no credit for it.

"In which class am I?" she said, rather naïvely.

"I'm not exactly sure, yet."

"Well, I'll enlighten you, Mr. Graveur. I am not good, thank Heavens!"

"Another one of your theories."

"No, not a theory, but a real fact." As she went on there was a wistfulness, a certain shading in her voice, that showed Graveur she was in deep earnest. "I'm not good. I'm only what looks like being good because things don't tempt me enough. Or else it is circumstance, as you say. However, I am not good. I want things, only I don't want them to come cheaply, through resignation. I want what I want when I dream. Oh, you don't know what I dream.

"I've got a little sister, Mr. Graveur," she said, looking up at him, "that I've been thinking about all day. She doesn't know the world is moving around her. She's like a cork in the water, bobbing up and down when the waves are rough, placid and quiet when the water is smooth. But she doesn't know she's living, poor child. And yet she goes through—a good deal. And some day she'll go down under the waves. She's at the mercy of everyone, at-the-mercy-of-world like. And when she goes down, people will blame her, and say she is a bad

woman, when in reality it is because she is believing and good.

"But I repudiate the very word *good*. Ough, it's like the smell of onions to me," she added.

Graveur listened to her in a state of mingled interest and perplexity. As she finished, he said:

"Thatah, you puzzle me. I don't believe I will ever understand you. You jump so on everything I suggest."

She saw that his fingers were clenched tightly together. "You think too deeply, and strangely. It isn't good for you."

The girl folded her hands restlessly, and leaned a little forward. "Yes, I know, but I'd rather think in this fashion and even be unhappy, than to be happy ignorantly, Mr. Graveur."

When Thatah left the office, she hurried back to Hagar. The late summer's sun was penetrating through a light veil of mist and though it was growing rapidly dusk, Thatah walked all the way. It seemed to give her better opportunity to turn over in her mind the problem that confronted her.

One thought occupied her most. It was the idea that lay back of the words she had poured into Hagar's ears that morning.

Entering the vestibule of Hagar's place she paused to ring, and then as no one came, silently went up the stairs.

At the second landing, she met Mrs. Kempfest.

She asked of the woman, "Is Hagar asleep?"

"Hagar! Oh, you mean Mrs. Kennedy? I didn't know her first name —"

"Mrs. Kennedy —"

"Yes, miss, I just left her. She is not sleeping; she'll be glad to see you."

Thatah went up the third flight. As her glance fell upon the half-closed door, shutting off all the unhappiness and ugliness that lay back of it, an uncomfortable feeling of awe took hold of her.

She heard Hagar stir in the bed.

"May I come in?" she asked softly.

"Yes, sister."

"I'm all out of breath," said Thatah, as she entered the room and sat by the side of the bed. She added, a little jocularly, "You should have an elevator, Hagar."

"On seven dollars a week?"

Hagar's remark gave Thatah the opportunity to remark that she had brought along ten dollars. "I thought that would help," Thatah said carelessly.

Hagar would not accept it however, until Thatah had promised to let her pay it back.

Immediately they fell to talking of prospects for the future.

"You know, I'm going to be up against it, when I get out of bed," confided Hagar. "I'll have to get a job, and the way I feel now, I don't believe I will be able to hold down anything that requires hard work. Why, sometimes," she said faintly, "I think that — that he'll come back — and marry me, and make things all right. Somehow it seems the only way for everything to end happily."

"Would you marry him, after what he's done?" asked Thatah.

"Why, sure. It's his duty to support me — and the child."

"But supposing you hated him — as you probably ought to hate him for leaving you — you couldn't go and live with him after that, could you?"

"I — well, I never thought of that. What would you do?"

Thatah smiled. "Oh, I don't know. I suppose I'd mind convention and think more of the child's name than of my feelings. That's the usual thing."

Hagar swept a furtive glance in Thatah's direction. "You know," she said with some spirit, "I feel different sometimes, when I am not so puzzled about the right and wrong of the thing. Then, I feel like I ought to hunt up Frank's mother. She lives near Albany some place, and get his address, and then go where he is, and —"

"And what?"

"Oh, sometimes I feel as if I ought to kill him for getting me in this trouble. And then — there'll come a feeling that makes me remember how happy we were together up there on the hill, all alone — and I forgive him."

Thatah walked over to the window. "Poor little sister," she murmured, quite inaudibly.

"But if I get out of this all right, I'll make somebody pay — pretty dearly for it, too."

Thatah came over and sat down on the bed's edge. "Why, what do you mean, Hagar?"

"Oh, I mean that I will get even for what I've gone through."

"You mean you'll take a revenge on the whole sex, then?"

"Yes, something like that, I guess."

"Which is exactly what every woman says, Hagar," exclaimed Thatah earnestly. "We love and yearn blindly, without anyone sharing our happiness, and yet if we suffer by them, we want the whole world to share our misery."

At that moment, Mrs. Kempfest knocked at the door and asked if she should bring in the supper.

"Oh, will you stay?" Hagar pleaded, taking Thatah's hand.

As her sister hesitated, Hagar gave the order for two suppers.

"But what will father think?" interjected Thatah.

"Good Lord, can't you stay away without having to account for every moment?"

"I haven't yet, sister," smiled Thatah.

"I'll bet I wouldn't pet him so. How is he?"

"Oh, getting along all right, I suppose."

"Does he ever ask for me?"

"He asks very often, Hagar."

Both were silent for some minutes.

Then Hagar spoke up. "Oh, well, things had to be the way they were, didn't they?"

"I guess so." An enigmatical smile covered Thatah's pale face.

"He never showed he cared for me," blurted out Hagar, after some thought.

Thatah answered immediately: "Don't talk so, dear, he is very fond of you. Perhaps more so than of me. It would break his heart, if he knew — of this, for instance. He's always looking at your picture."

"Does he do that?"

Thatah nodded.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, you won't tell him, will you? You must promise that. You won't ever tell, will you, Thatah?"

"I won't, Hagar," promised Thatah.

But before Hagar was pacified, she made Thatah swear with one hand on the little Bible that Mrs. Kempfest had left on the mantelpiece.

Then Hagar lay back on her pillow, her chin doubled against her chest, her arms back of her head.

As she sat on the edge of the bed, Thatah smoothed back the hair that hung over the girl's forehead. "I

used to wonder, what you'd come to some day, Hagar," she remarked.

Hagar laughed sadly. "You don't wonder any more, do you, sister?"

"Well, I don't know. This isn't the end."

"But you don't think — I'm only beginning, do you?"

"Oh, I rather think so, Hagar."

"But, sister, I don't understand you," Hagar interrupted, with wrinkled brows. "Surely you see what I'm up against. I've got to support" — she hesitated, as if she disliked the word — "this child, and raise it, and then some day tell it the truth, and see it run away from me —"

"Because people will be telling him you've no right to him?"

"Yes. That, and because he'll probably be like his father."

"Poor child, Hagar."

"Oh, to tell the truth — I'm tired of it before I begin, Thatah. Everything seems so foolish, useless — I wish — oh, I don't know what I wish, sometimes."

"There is a way out of it, sister, if you just think."

"Oh, tell me, Thatah."

"Well, just live for the *some day*, Hagar. If I didn't have *that* to think about, I don't know what I'd do, either. Of course we're poor, and we have got to be reconciled to the fact that in the meantime we've just got to live in the niche set aside for our kind."

Hagar's lips were pressed together with determination.

"I'll bet I get out of it, if they ever give me a chance," she exclaimed.

Thatah noticed the bitterness in her sister's words.

"Well, after all, that is the only way to look at it.

Hope, dream,—after all, it's been just that, that has kept me up more than anything I've ever fed myself, Hagar. It's true, though"—she rose from the side of the bed—"one has to wait, wait, wait, and yet we have no more chance of getting what we want than if we ran on to it by accident, the first day of our search. That's the way things are run, though. Oh, things aren't a bit fair, not a bit."

Thatah's face presented a strange appearance to Hagar as she went on talking. The languor seemed to have died from the eyes, the lips were thinly drawn—in that moment she imagined she could see all the yearning and aching days her sister had gone through. And she became filled with a feeling of deep pity and affection.

Thatah went on talking in hard, compressed tones. "That's the reason, Hagar, people think me soured and vindictive; that's the reason father thinks I have no feeling or understanding for human things; yes, that's the reason I'm going to take this baby off your hands, Hagar."

"Thatah, whatever are you saying?" said Hagar in astonishment.

"Just what I mean, Hagar. I am going to take him home as soon as the doctor thinks I can."

Hagar was overwhelmed by the enormity of the idea, made perhaps more startling and expressive by its nonchalant entrance.

"You can't mean—that you are going to take him, and raise him—for me?"

"More than that. I am going to take him and teach him, and fall in love with him. Why shouldn't I? I am a woman—it's my right. You don't need ever to bother about him. I'll tell them at home that I have taken him from some Foundling Asylum. Why, it's the only way

out of it for you, though I'm not doing it for that reason — unless, someone knows already."

"No one knows, Thatah." Hagar thought of Miss Gillespie and Herrick. "That is — that's here."

"Well, then, it's the only possible way out of it for you. You ought to be happy about it."

"Happy — why you take my breath away, Thatah. Are you doing this for me?"

"Oh, for both of us," answered Thatah vaguely.

"I certainly can't understand," Hagar kept on.

Herself really surprised that she had so easily worded the vague idea that had bothered her all day, Thatah now became quite determined. "Yes, I'll take him — be as a mother to him — only you must promise one thing."

"What's that?"

"That if I take him — that you won't ever want him back."

"Gee, you needn't worry about that," Hagar said positively.

And so, before Thatah left, arrangements had been quite completed to carry out Thatah's desire.

That night, as Hagar lay in her bed with the crying baby at her side, there came speculatively before her vision, a half dozen words; they seemed to be emblazoned in burning embers against a black, cloudy sky; and the words blazed back and forth and beckoned to her in their dancing, shooting jets of flame: "Free again — free again — free again." And each little spark had its own vague significance.

Hagar, with the wonderful rebound of youth, gained strength in the days that followed. It was not long before the young smiling physician, in his old-experienced manner, told her that she could leave the bed.

CHAPTER XXII

WITH Thatah's money, a nurse was paid to stay with the baby, and two months after Hagar left her sick bed, she was strong enough to take a position in another department of Macy's.

Though the extra expense, for the nurse, drained heavily on Thatah, she met the outlay with a good deal of satisfaction, feeling that she could only look at it in one way — the building of a foundation for her future happiness. With this in her mind, it became a pleasure, during the period of waiting until the baby could be placed on bottled nourishment, to stint herself and borrow advance salary.

Then one day, after talking with the doctor, Thatah went to Hagar's room with the news that the baby could be taken away.

After very little ceremony, the nurse woman was dismissed, and Thatah took the child back to Mrs. Neer's boarding house. It was quite late when she arrived with her little human bundle but there was no surprise expressed by any of the different boarders who saw her come into the house. For weeks she had followed a carefully laid plan, casually mentioning now and then the fact that she thought of adopting a child.

It was not long before the relationship between Hagar and Thatah was as quiet and slumbering as it had always been.

In fact the only time that they had anything in common again was when Thatah wrote and asked if she might name the youngster "Edric."

"It seems to fit him," wrote Thatah. "What do you say?"

Hagar wrote back: "It's all the same to me."

So the boy was named "Edric," and the former state of sisterly disinterestedness became as it was before. Hagar felt quite free again, while Thatah understood in a queer sort of way, that in taking the child she had somehow justified her ambitions.

Hagar was free again. Indeed, great as was her appreciation of an escape from a lifetime of devotion to this child which she could not love, her eagerness for a new life was greater, and after a short time encompassed this feeling of gratitude which for a few days after Thatah had taken the child, had been quite keen.

It was not a saddened woman that stepped out from her fetters, but a young eager girl again. There was only added to her former state of youthful anticipation, the appreciation of life that enters into the mind of the matured woman. She was clever now, but not any longer in the former childlike way. Now she knew how to read people's faces, search their minds, play upon their points at least resistance.

Before her new position was three months old, the manager raised her salary to nine dollars a week because of the increased sales in her department, and it gave Hagar some satisfaction when she put four dollars of this money in an envelope and sent it to Thatah.

However, the recipient of the envelope was having a harder time than Hagar imagined.

A few days after the infant was brought into the domicile of Mrs. Neer, there seemed to enter along with it a peculiar condition of apathy on the part of the entire household. It affected Mrs. Costello, Mr. Samuels, and even Mrs. Neer felt as if an alien or intruder had been allowed to enter the house.

At the table one night, Mrs. Neer spoke up. "I can't see why Miss Revelly should undertake to raise some foundling, just because of a whim. I should think her father would have more control over her."

"Where did she get it?" intruded a little woman at the end of the table.

"At some Foundling Asylum," Mrs. Costello answered coldly.

The little woman answered back: "It seems to me they have had a hard enough time living as it is."

"Some people are fools," added Mrs. Costello.

When Thatah and her father came downstairs there was a hush, as if to bury the subject for future use, though there was the usual effusive hypocrisies—"Good evening, professor"—"Good evening, Miss Revelly"—"Good evening, Mrs. Neer"—"Won't you pass the meat platter for the professor, Mr. Samuels?"—"Ah—we were just saying, Miss Thatah"—while to herself Thatah counted the moments till she could rush upstairs and confide in the little pink-skinned youngster.

They had small steaks for supper that evening and Mrs. Costello was asking Thatah to pass the dish for a second helping, when she remarked, in a well-meant effort to cover up her request:

"Well, Miss Revelly, it will be nice to watch the youngster grow older, won't it?"

"You think so?" replied Thatah, amused by the woman's effort to get her into a discussion concerning Edric.

"Don't you?"

"Well, I don't know," said Thatah. "I can't help thinking it might make me feel awfully old, and make me realize that I ought to have gotten married myself."

Mrs. Costello ignored her latter remark, and went on to say that she thought one could get a great deal of

pleasure seeing a baby grow up and go through all the processes of age.

"Well," Thatah replied, "I had a conversation with Mme. Reppy yesterday — you know her, she sings in Wagnerian Opera — and I asked her if she didn't get a lot of pleasure from her two children. Her reply startled me."

"What did she say?" asked the Spanish woman.

"That she couldn't help acknowledging that she disliked seeing her children grow up. 'I see my children living the life I should like to live myself,' she said; 'and I can't confess anything else. I love them, but when I see my oldest so happy and gay, when she calls me mother — well — it hurts me, because I'd like to be doing that myself.'"

"She's a bad woman to talk like that," added some one near the professor.

"I don't think so," said Thatah. "I believe I'd feel the same way."

"Then why did you adopt a child?"

"Oh — I suppose to see if my surmises were right. Then I think every woman should have a child — before she is thirty, anyway. I didn't want to be left out."

That she shouldn't have made such a careless, at random statement, Thatah realized, when her words met with an incomprehensible silence. But she minded very little; the same sinister glances, the same unsaid words had been exchanged at that board for months; she had always longed for some phrase, some sentence, that would shock them. Many times she had run upstairs gleefully, when her words had brought about the desired effect.

"You must not say such things, Thatah," her father would exclaim. "We live here, and these people are fools."

"Oh, I can't help it, father," she would answer.

The seed of suspicion was being planted deeply now. Before, Thatah had always been so quiet, never going out, living the life of a recluse. And now that she smiled and was happy, they decided that a hidden reason was the cause for this change in her. Formerly when she was very quiet, they had cast about for explanation, only to be piqued by their continuous fruitless search. Now it was with satisfaction that they began to probe something that gave them a return.

In the minds of those in the house that interested themselves about it, there was a complete chain of incidents to work upon. Surely the baby was the secret of it all — and night after night they went about the house asking of themselves why it was that a girl her age should indulge in so maternal a pastime, and what they should do about it.

One evening a few weeks later, Mrs. Costello stopped Thatah in the hallway and asked her directly, the name of the Foundling Institution from which Thatah had procured the infant.

The girl was taken completely by surprise.

"Why — the St. Vincent's Asylum," she managed to say at last.

"I was just wondering," explained Mrs. Costello; "a friend of mine was thinking of doing the same thing."

There was a whispered council held in the drawing-room that night between Mrs. Neer and the poetess.

"I tell you she got as pale as a sheet!"

"What did you ask her?" whispered Mrs. Neer.

The woman told her.

"Did she answer you right off?"

"Right off? Why, she fumbled around for a full minute. You bet she never got that child at a Foundling Asylum!"

"Then what do you think?"

"I don't know. She was gone for nearly three months on her *position*, as she said. Still, would that make it?"

"You don't believe —?"

"It's hard to tell; there's something wrong."

"Well, I'm going to find out at St. Vincent's. It's the only way."

"Yes, you do that," emphasized Mrs. Neer. "I won't have the respectability of this place spoiled."

"It is for that reason I told you."

For a few days the embers lay smothering, though with every mood of Thatah, every word that escaped her lips, there was added a few more coals to the heap. Significance was given now to her fondness for the child.

"How could she become so excited over it, if it wasn't her own," was asked of Mrs. Neer.

And then Mrs. Costello could find no record of the child at the Asylum.

It ended by Mrs. Neer voicing her suspicions and that of the boarders, to the professor.

"I feel compelled to talk to you, Professor Revelly," she said to him one evening, "about a matter, a very serious matter that has been given a great deal of serious attention before I come to you. As you know I have some people with me, who, although they may not be blessed by any great amount of worldly goods, yet who are nevertheless, highly respectable, and whose respectability, it is my duty to protect. As you know, Mrs. Costello was born of a fairly near connection with the Royal Family of Spain —"

He interrupted her. "Tell me what it is you wish to say to me," he said impatiently.

"Well, professor, it is very difficult, since it is about your daughter —"

"My daughter!"

"Yes, the knowledge of what I am going to say has

been quite as hard for us to bear, as it is for me to tell you. But I feel that I must do it to protect my household. Of course if I were living alone it would be a different thing. I'd just say to them, 'mind your own business.'"

"What do you want to know about my daughter?" he now demanded, with all the nervous, explosive energy that had accumulated during her speech.

"Well — we think that she — that she is not the same woman she was when she left you."

He was puzzled.

"When she left me," he repeated; "she was no more than a baby." He was indeed thinking of Hagar. That it was Thatah of whom she was speaking never entered his mind. Anything unusual about her was too remote to consider.

"How did you know of Hagar?" he asked bewildered. "Tell me quick, tell me how you know about her, and what she has done?"

It was Mrs. Neer's turn now for confusion.

"Why, professor, I was speaking of Thatah, your daughter. I didn't know you had another child."

"You are talking of Thatah?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, when she was away for three months."

He looked at her, utterly unable to comprehend her words.

"And now she brings into the house a baby."

"Well?"

"Well, you know how people talk. Right at the first they asked me about it, and I told them that Thatah had the right to adopt a child if she wanted to. Then of course, the baby was a good deal older, which I told them; but they tried to convince me that perhaps we hadn't watched —"

"Go ahead," he demanded fiercely.

"Well, then, they pointed out that you were too poor to indulge in anything like that. They said there was something queer about it. Of course, I didn't believe them, never have, really. But you see my position."

He looked at her, smiling faintly.

"My dear Mrs. Neer," he asked, "what is it you want me to do?"

"We want — oh, it's so hard to say it, professor — but we want to know — who — rather — if Miss Thatah is married?"

"Ach," he exclaimed, "you speak in metaphors. I don't follow you. You want to know if Thatah is married?" He laughed sadly. "No, poor dear, she is not married, but what do you want to know for? You think the child is hers? And you wonder why the father never comes. Yes? Am I right?"

"You are very right," she answered, straightening her shoulders for the ordeal she supposed would follow.

For a long time he was lost in deep thought.

Then he began slowly: "My daughter has adopted the little fellow. It has pleased her to do so, and as she is of an age where she can use her own mind and spend her own money, I make no objection to it. She pays for the nurse girl, I do not. Is there anything else?" he asked, arising from his chair.

But Mrs. Neer remained seated.

"Do you know where she adopted the child?" Her lips set into hard lines.

"Why, Thatah said — I believe I've forgotten." He searched his mind for recollection of the time Thatah informed him that she had learned of a child in one of the Asylums and intended adopting it.

His hesitation encouraged Mrs. Neer.

"You don't know, do you?" She gave a little mocking laugh. "Of course not. I guess she's fooled you

too, professor. Well, I can tell you the name of the place she gave Mrs. Costello."

"And what of that?"

"Only that they don't know anything about it, at the place she told us — St. Vincent's."

Now the name came back to him.

"Yes," he said, "that was the name she told me the other day." He looked at her fully in the face. With some satisfaction she perceived that he was becoming aroused. "You asked her, and she told you St. Vincent's," he went on, "and they don't know anything about it there?"

"Yes. And to make it sure, we — or rather, the party who went, got the names of the only other two institutions where there was any resemblance of the names. And she got the same information at these places, too.

"Why, no one ever adopted a child from any of these places during the week she brought Edric here. So you see, professor, the situation that confronts me. It pains me so much, but —" she hesitated.

"But what?"

"— but I must ask you — you to leave — unless Miss Thatah can offer some explanation that is satisfactory to us. I am sure you understand. It protects you and her as well as it does us."

That night Revelly confronted Thatah with a recount of the interview. And as the girl sat forlornly in front of him, he mistook her anguish for wrath, and begged her to go to them and tell them their mistake. "You've got to, Thatah," he begged.

Then he asked her why they couldn't find any record at St. Vincent's.

From anger and vindictiveness, her mind now answered more quickly than her lips.

"I didn't get Edric at St. Vincent's," she said hotly.

"Then why did you say that?" he begged in surprise.

"I told them that because they were so inquisitive and suspicious. I would have told them the police station if I had thought of it, I hate them so."

"Thatah!"

"Yes —!"

"Then you didn't get Edric at St. Vincent's?"

"No, I didn't."

"Then where did you get him?"

"I won't tell."

She answered quietly, and added after a moment's thought, "nor will I ever."

"You must tell me," he demanded. "I can tell them."

Thatah looked at her father with fast dimming eyes.

"Father, please don't ask me," she begged.

"You refuse to tell me," he cried, greatly bewildered.

"I—I—I can't tell anyone," she replied in a voice that wavered.

Revelly grasped her hands. "My God —! Do you know what they are saying? They say that you are the mother and that we must leave the premises."

Thatah was overwhelmed by his statement.

"They say that!" she cried in anger. "They say that I'm the mother? Good Heavens!"

"Yes, Thatah, they say that. And you must tell them, therefore, where you got it. This thing must be proven."

In that moment all the possibility of her position came vividly before Thatah. She saw that she must think quickly, even calmly — and then a queer feeling came into her head.

"Father, come, I feel sick. I'll tell you in a moment," she said, sinking into a chair.

As she sat there, staring at her father, she searched her mind frantically. Could she tell him the truth? Surely not. Even though she break her promise to Ha-

gar, the news might cause his collapse in his worn condition. Though he never mentioned Hagar to her, yet she knew the place Hagar had in his regard. Had she not noticed that he mentioned Hagar's name with a little hush and reverence in his voice. For him Hagar was the last cherished memory of the past, and he clung tenaciously to that last remnant.

Thatah recalled how he had taken a picture of the girl from his trunk and put it on his bureau. She remembered how he would often look at it. And now to herself she moaned, "Oh, I can't tell the truth — I can't. She is the youngest. It would kill him."

Her father was studying her closely.

"You've thought long enough," he said hotly. "Now tell me." He grasped her arm a bit roughly, as if to awaken her to action.

"I can't, father," she confessed at last. A great lump rose in her throat. "I can't tell them — or you."

Revelly walked away from her, his hands clasping and unclasping at his back. At last he stopped and with his back still to her, said to the bare walls, "You hear, it's true, it's true — oh, my God!"

His senses seemed to give way entirely. Everything pointed to the justification of their accusation. He saw that he had been taken in, by his own daughter. His mind was flooded by proofs. Thatah was now making less than twenty dollars a week, yet she was willing to pay four dollars out of that sum for a nurse who stayed with the child. Why had he not thought to question her about that!

Perceiving the anguish that lay plainly evidenced in his countenance, Thatah went to him and put her arms around his neck, and said:

"Father, for pity's sake, listen to me! Don't make this thing so serious. I can't tell you. I wish I could.

I promised — I promised the woman I would not tell. I dare not break that. Oh, please — please — believe me!"

And in turn Revelly pleaded with her not to sacrifice the other woman for their future happiness. "Think what it means if you don't explain. They will say that their convictions are right. We will have to leave."

"I can't — father — I can't," she begged.

"Then you care more for this — other woman — than you do for me — than you do for yourself?"

"Oh, I don't know. Don't ask me."

For some time he pleaded with her, and then as he realized she would not give in, he turned from her, and left her alone for some minutes. When he did speak, his words choked with anger.

"I can't believe that you are so foolish," he said. "However" — and now his lips were drawn tight — "you know your own plans best. You will either have to share the secret with me along with everything else — that — or else go your own way."

She ran to his side. "Oh, father, don't say that! You don't know what I'd go through for you — or have gone through. Please don't say that!"

She could see the terrible, strange gaze creeping back into his eyes.

"I don't want you to leave," he said sternly, though a bit broken; "but I won't harbor such a misdeed. I can only believe now that you are keeping something from me, Thatah. You've told me so little about your work this summer." He was silent for a time. "And you've been so queer, so unusual, since taking the child. Won't you tell me?"

"I tell you they are wrong. I can't tell you any more, father," she cried.

"Well, we will have to leave here, and wherever we went it would be the same. One boarding house is like another.

And my pupils — if they heard, or their parents heard, do you suppose they would be allowed to come to these rooms? ”

Thatah rose from the chair.

“ Enough, father, I’ll go — so you can stay,” she said. “ I’ll get things fixed up and leave in a few days, with Edric.” Her eyes were dry and her voice dull.

At the end of the week, under a fusillade of glances from behind closed shutters, Thatah moved her few belongings out of the house, and with Edric who was now creeping merrily in a vain effort to gain his unsteady feet, she rented a room in a lodging house on Fifty-seventh Street. . . .

It was when the express wagon was out of sight that Mrs. Costello rushed to Professor Revelly’s room with the desire to unload some words of sympathy.

But her knock was answered by a mumbled oath from within; she could hear his restless pacing across the floor of the room.

So she stole downstairs, guiltily fearing that some one would see her and think that she had weakened or had sought forgiveness from the father.

It was only three days, however, before Thatah was called back from her new boarding place. Her father had become seriously ill.

And at the end of a week of suffering, the sick man became too weak to leave his bed. Thatah stayed constantly by his side, watching, and praying that her fears were groundless. But the doctor came each day and pointed out to her further signs of dissolution, and the sobbing and shaking girl was soon barely able to keep up under her load.

It seemed to her, as she watched the shrunken figure in the bed, that she were in some trance, and all that was happening, only a dream; but it seemed a trance which

left her in full possession of her senses and made her realize the painful circumstances even more keenly.

An unusual part of his illness was that between the deliriums, his mind would be very clear. And then his words, full of sadness and disappointment, would further rend the feelings of the girl at his bedside, although he never mentioned the incident that had driven her from him.

"Do you remember, Thatah, when I used to carry you on my shoulder?" he would ask.

Thatah could not speak, her heart too full of unhappiness. She could only take his vein-ridden hand and press it, feeling that she dare not answer him, for fear of weakening and betraying her emotions.

Often he spoke of his favorite Heine, seeming to liken his own life to that of the dead poet. One afternoon, when the light from the setting sun came into the room and gave it a queer appearance of mingled shadows and high lights, he quoted to her the last lines of the "*Enfant Perdu*."

"But I have fallen unvanquished — sword unbroken,
The only thing that's broken is my heart."

Then he looked up, exclaiming: "Oh, Thatah, how true that is."

She could scarcely breathe, a great sense of constriction coming into her throat, while the tears ran down her cheeks.

He perceived her unhappiness, and said, "No, no, Thatah. You have youth yet, child. You must not be unhappy."

Thatah made an effort at smiling and wiped away her tears, at the same time, saying in a low voice: "Oh, I am not unhappy, father. But you must get well, you must, you must!"

He answered, half to himself: "Oh, what does it all amount to? Everything ends in nothing, everything is empty, futile, at the end."

At another time, a few evenings later, she came into the room to find him staring at the ceiling, and muttering aloud. She ran up to him crying: "Please, father, please —"

But he went on speaking, seemingly unaware that she was listening to him, although he directed his words entirely to her. For the first time, he seemed dazed. There were tears in his eyes.

"Yes, I know life," he said, shaking his head, as she tried to stop him. "Yes, I know how we fool ourselves over it, how we expect and build and believe, knowing full well that we have nothing to do with our destiny."

Though he spoke slowly, laboriously, and each effort appeared to take all his strength, he kept on, and nothing that Thatah could do would divert his attention.

The sunlight had slowly disappeared from the room, leaving his gaunt face in a veil-like shadow. Thatah could not look at him and sat with her face to the wall, while she clasped his hand.

"We are constructed to live out a certain period of years, if all goes well, Thatah," he kept on feebly. "Yes, it's unalterable. Even then it would not be so bad, if a mind had not been given us; but we have placed within us a propensity for feeling and experiencing emotions. Yes, that is the great wrong."

"Please, please, quiet yourself. You need this strength," Thatah begged.

His voice was weak and the hands that lay in Thatah's, trembled with every breath. However, he seemed determined to word his thoughts.

"The normal state should be happiness," he whispered. "We should all be free beings — to breathe and enjoy —"

and sing the song of life. Yes, that's the way it ought to be. But the abnormal state is happiness — and we can only measure it — by the contrast — born of our misery."

"Please, father, don't tremble so."

He was speaking from his very depths, his hands shaking, his lips quivering, his eyes closed.

"You have been so unhappy, all your life, father," pleaded Thatah. "Please, don't let me see you this way now."

He searched for her hand along the border of the white sheet and when at last he had found it, a sigh escaped from his lips.

"Yes, I am going to die," he breathed, nearly inaudibly. The words brought to Thatah's aching heart a fresh tumult of agony.

Although he was suffering intense physical pain, his agony of mind was manifestly greater. And she labored gallantly to soothe him into a state of greater calm.

It was only after night had brought its darker shadows into the room that she was able to quiet him, and could go into the small room that was temporarily her own again, for a few hours of sleep.

The professor rested better the next few days and Thatah became more encouraged. It seemed that her coming had given him added strength.

Then the disease began to attack afresh his non-resistant organisms; the anasarca became more noticeably apparent, the œdema infiltrated into the lower lids, until they looked like little sacks; his entire shrunken frame spoke of fast ebbing vitality.

On the twelfth day after he had taken to his bed, *Eman Revelly* died.

CHAPTER XXIII

HAGAR's feeling of ecstasy in her first month of the new position soon passed into the second month, when her interest waned — the third bored her altogether, even though she had success in her sales.

The very things which had at first been so pleasant, now bothered her. After the weeks of turmoil and heart stress she had endured, the petty gossip of the girls behind the counter had come like some sweet music to her. They were welcoming chimes that spoke of quiet and peace.

But her previous soul weariness and fathoming into the depths had played their part. She quickly became dull and stupid, and soon found herself fairly ashamed to look into the eyes of a customer.

A rebellion arose in her now. Why should she be waiting on people, talking respectfully and courteously to them? Who were they that she should act like their servant?

One day she was openly insulted. A dark woman, attired in a rich crimson broad-cloth, swept into the aisle, and stopped at her counter.

"Tell me, Mary," said the woman, looking at Hagar; "where are the laces?"

"That way," answered Hagar, pointing to a distant counter, and then adding a little angrily; "however, my name isn't Mary!"

The woman looked at her, "Such impertinence," she gasped.

Then Hagar saw her edge off in a flustering indignation to hunt up the floor walker.

It aroused Hagar tremendously, and she had to fight hard to keep from leaving her position back of the counter and confronting the woman.

The metamorphosis in Hagar took place gradually, during the weeks that followed. When a well-dressed woman approached her, immediately she became absorbed in a contemplation of the gown that adorned her patron, even to the neglect of the customer's wishes; if the little woman who worked at her side spoke to her, she answered with coldness and disdain.

At the beginning of the third month, the manager had spoken to her three times, regarding her lack of politeness.

She became abnormally quiet, as the weeks went on, as though she were always thinking deeply. When people talked to her, a queer little smile pirouetted about her full lips; if she laughed sometimes it was a laugh that was vague and unfathomable, with a ring of derision in it. It was as if she had battled with giants and was now looking upon their prostrated forms and pitying their weakness.

If ever she talked to those around, there was something savage in her words. Had she been less pretty, they would have called it plain anger. As it was, they found mystery and romance in her bitterness.

Another and greater change took place in her. No more did she become excited or have strange throbbings in her heart; not even when, one day, she nearly ran into Greenfield in front of the store. She simply sulked into the crowd that was watching a display in the show windows, and became one of the conglomerate mass until he had passed.

Often there crept into her thoughts, a question that begged for the reason of this peculiar change in her. It

seemed that something had gripped her heart and held it away from her realler feelings. She found that she could understand the hidden meanings in every word of hypocrisy which came to her ears. When men glanced at her now, she read their thoughts. There was no more a feeling of elation when people talked kindly to her. She only reasoned that the kind words were of very little material use, the way the world goes on. Almost uncanny was she now in her ability to discard everything but what would teach her something or make her more wise and experienced.

In only a few months did she seem to have come from her youthful innocence into a woman of the world. And though her eyes were quite as limpid, her mouth just as virginal and youthful, there was in her mind a wild clamoring, a relentless searching for more and greater gifts from life.

Always waiting for something to happen, hoping eternally, but silently, and never confiding the slightest confidence to anyone, she lay in bed each morning, with the sun streaming in upon her from between the slits in the shutters, asking that the something happen that day; and when the day was over, and the vague thing that would stimulate her had not made known its presence, she would go home, resigned, saddened a little, but waiting for the morrow.

It was fortunate that her charming manner did not so easily desert her, although it may have been a pose on her part. When she was away from the store and people, and alone in her little room at the boarding house, there would be some minutes when she became hard visaged, and her countenance would gain the appearance of some caged animal — of an animal who, as he walks up and down behind the steel bars, peers out enigmatically into the faces of the crowd before it.

But in her eyes there still lurked the expression of dormant passion so tremendously attractive. It continued to be part of the mysterious veil of beauty that fascinated anyone with whom she came in contact, just as her voice retained the dulcet music that spoke of yearning and innocence.

One night she passed the Belasco Theatre. A desire to eat alone, downtown, instead of sharing the board at home, kept her until nearly eight o'clock. Then, her umbrella in hand (the weather had warmed suddenly and settled into a fine drizzle), she wandered up Sixth Avenue and over past Broadway. When she came to the broad passage way in front of the theatre, with all the carriages and automobiles pouring out their well-dressed occupants, she drew back into the shadow of the gallery door.

A long time had it been since she had witnessed such gaiety, emblazoned by silks and jewels, and she stood quietly, observing closely the people that walked by. Once, as an elegantly gowned woman passed her, she unconsciously looked down onto the frayed edge of her own coat sleeve — and suddenly remembered how poor she was and that she was not of this world of silks and jewels.

Just missing by an inch the slanting mist as it came down onto the sidewalk, Hagar became filled with a feeling of utter resentment. The ugly facies buried in their ropes of pearls taunted her, the sheen of their silks, that covered the many illy-formed ankles, made her feel like running out and showing them her own well-rounded limbs.

She half whispered to herself that they had no more right to the fine clothes than she. Hadn't she known depths to which they would never descend; hadn't she suffered, loved; was not her face quite as pretty, if not prettier than any one of those who stepped from the automobiles and carriages?

Involuntarily she grasped at the little lace piece about her collar. It was stiff and coarse. But no wonder — did she not have to pay full price now for such things? When she was with Greenfield — she remembered the box of silk stockings he had presented to her. Why, she could be as richly dressed, as these people, if she wished it. The thought brought back a little of her proud spirit.

That night, Hagar sat on the edge of her quilted bed and for nearly the first time, carefully manicured her nails — until it was long past midnight.

It was a difficult task for Hagar to stay at her work, after that night in front of the Belasco Theatre. She could not quite account for it, except that it seemed such a waste of time and energy to be working for a few dollars a week and such a hardship to be kind to the patrons, when none of the money came into her own pocket.

One Monday morning she was insolent to one of the store detectives who came to her disguised as a shopper. And that afternoon a little red-faced woman, took her place beside Hagar, and Mr. Mathering, the head of the department, notified her that she was to “break in” the little woman, then call for her pay.

On the first of the month Hagar found herself without a position, and utterly without knowledge of any position that might please her. But it really bothered her very little.

A few months before, childish innocence might have compelled Hagar to suffer deeply from her present circumstance.

It was indeed different now. Instead of giving in and sitting in her room, to brood over her luck, she became more determined and resolute than ever in her life.

Fixing up the little brown tailor-made suit she had saved from the past, she spent the whole evening in mending and pressing it; and then sallied into the bright sun-

light the next morning, with the mood of a butterfly which had just come from out its chrysalis.

True, she realized what might happen if she were unsuccessful in obtaining the position she wanted.

But of one thing she was certain. No matter in what straits she found herself, she would not again accept a position in a department store. There was so little chance for advancement there, and so very little opportunity for excitement.

It was excitement she craved after all, Hagar now realized. How foolish she had been not to know that before, how idiotic she had been when listening to those cooing words of Herrick, and thinking that the earning of eight dollars a week was the road to riches and success.

Many plans swept through Hagar as she stepped blithely down the poverty worn stair's carpet that led to the street vestibule. She would not be a fool again. She was free. Thatah had been fool enough to burden herself with the Herrick's off-spring; so much more reason was there that she should not be a fool, too.

Hagar thought of the places that she might visit in search for a position. Of course, Greenfield would take her back — but she remembered his conditions. And then she would not again do department store work, anyway.

At noon she stopped to rest against a counter at Altman's. By her side stood a young woman, who was deep in the purchase of some silk stockings. Absorbed with her own thoughts, Hagar gave her very little attention until by instinct, her attention was attracted to the purchaser.

The young woman said to the girl back of the counter: "Send them up to the Hotel Astor, right away. I want to wear them to-night." Then a sudden thought made her change her mind and she directed that the parcel be sent to the stage door of the Casino.

"Oh, are you an actress?" Hagar heard the girl ask with admiration.

The actress answered, very patronizingly, "Yes, child."

Immediately after she left the counter, Hagar questioned the salesgirl.

"What was her name?" asked Hagar.

"You mean the woman that just left?"

Hagar nodded.

"Gee, she was a beauty, wasn't she?" the girl commented, and then looked on her order slip.

"Helene Travers, that's her," said the girl in a moment.

Hagar was at the little box office window of the Casino Theatre, quite before she realized that something more crucial demanded her attention than following up a bit of curiosity. But there seemed so little else for her to do. Four want columns had failed to show anything that enticed her.

"I just wanted a programme," she told the ticket man. "I've got a friend in the show."

Out in the street again, she read in very small print, under the sub-title—"Waitresses in Restaurant," third act; the name—"Helene Travers."

"And she lives at the Astor," thought Hagar. "A charge account and living at the Hotel Astor!"

As Hagar thought over it she wondered if it would not be an adventure to seek employment at some theatrical agency, telling herself quite seriously that she would be willing to take a very small salary for a few weeks until she could learn about the work.

A dozen times she asked herself, as she walked down the street, "I wonder if I could do it."

By the time she had reached Forty-second Street, she had bought an Evening Telegram, and managed to find

the name of a hall on Sixth Avenue, where "Girls were wanted for a new Broadway success."

It was an adventure indeed, and she felt quite gay and light-hearted as she hunted for the address. She was not at all aware that no reputable management obtained girls in this manner.

The hall was over a drug store and after climbing up three flights of stairs, she entered a long narrow room filled with people and tobacco smoke. At the farthest end were congregated about twenty men and women in a group, chatting and laughing, while at the end nearest the door behind a dilapidated Japanese screen, sat a man, coatless and sleeves rolled up, busily engaged in interviewing two young women who confronted him.

Taking him to be the manager, from the pompous manner in which he talked, Hagar decided to quietly stand by their side until she could speak to him. Her heart was giving queer little jumps and as she heard the questions he asked of the girls, she was actually too startled to move.

"What have you done?"

"Your last engagement?"

"Stand off over there."

"Let's see your legs?"

Then she turned and fled precipitously down the wooden stairs.

"Oh, my Lord!" she muttered to herself. "Oh, my Lord!"

Buried in troublesome thought, Hagar entered a drug store and was at the telephone before she was really aware that it was Greenfield to whom she was calling in her moment of distress.

"Give me Chelsea 68181," she called in a trembling voice.

All too soon she recognized the voice of the central at Rheinchild's.

She half whispered. "I — I want to speak — to Mr. Greenfield."

The small voice came back. "Out to lunch. Back at two — good-bye."

How she thanked Heaven for the respite, as she hung up the receiver.

But when she called again and had him on the wire, her heart pounded as treacherously as ever, though she was somewhat reassured by the kindness of his voice. It seemed so good to hear him again.

"Well, well, Hagar," she heard him say. She could quite distinguish the surprise and wonder in his words.

"Yes, it is Hagar," she answered. And then, "Oh, Mr. Greenfield, I didn't want to see you again — but I can't help it. I'm — I'm out of a job — that's all I want to see you about. Can I have back the guide job?"

"Well, well, well," his voice came back, so soft and comforting.

There was a silence.

"What's the matter?" she begged.

"Come over and see me right away, child," he replied.

She hesitated. Stand before him again, face to face! How could she?

But hadn't she believed that she must do that sooner or later?

"What time will you be here?" he asked.

"I can come right away. I'm not working to-day."

For fear that her voice would weaken at the last moment and betray her feelings, she quickly hung up the receiver, and then regretted her abrupt ending of their talk.

In the ladies' dressing room at the Knickerbocker Hotel, she sat down for a few minutes to collect her thoughts.

For the first time she asked herself what she was doing. Was she returning to Greenfield to really get back her position as guide? After all, was there not a little untruth in that? And would he approach her again upon the old subject?

A bit of lip rouge and a dab of powder made her feel braver, and the kind smile of the woman in charge gave her more assurance.

Yet when she entered the great, huge entrance of Rheinchild's, she felt stiff and cold — as though she were in a trance.

"Where — where is Mr. Greenfield's office now?" she asked of the blonde-haired starter of the elevators.

The man looked at her: "Sixth floor, lady. What do you —" Then he recognized her. "Oh, the same as always," he added.

And somehow, his word of recognition gave her a certain feeling of intimacy, that braved her in much the same manner as had the smile of the lady in the dressing room.

The elevator man could not know how crucial was his smile, and how her heart was beating as she walked into the mirrored cage.

CHAPTER XXIV

SHE was before Greenfield, holding his hand. She told herself that he was better looking now than when she had known him before; he seemed to have more color in his face. But she felt disappointed when she saw his clothes fitted him less snugly, and that he seemed to be careless in the way his hair was combed. His nails were unmanicured, too, and his shoes were dull and streaky.

Hagar was coming in for a like examination at his hands and the while he realized she was studying him, Greenfield told himself this little woman had suffered since he had last seen her; that she was more calm and experienced looking.

Greenfield held her hand for a long time before saying anything.

At last, very softly, even wistfully, as if a year of long-ing lay wrapped in his words, he said: "So, Hagar — you are back?"

"Yes, I should like to have my old position back, if possible, Mr. Greenfield." Noticing that he was willing to let her go on, she added: "To-day, I didn't think I wanted to work in a department store again — but I think I'd take back my old position."

She stood quietly in front of him, feeling that it would be poor policy to say anything further until he spoke.

Greenfield was playing with a little paper knife on his desk.

"What's the matter?" asked Hagar.

Smiling faintly, he turned to her. "Sit down, Hagar, won't you?"

She took the chair he offered her.

"Well, I'm awfully glad to see you, little girl," he said.

It was a relief for her to hear him speak.

He repeated again, "Awfully glad."

At that moment Hagar wished that she could ask him about the year that had passed, and if he had been well and having a good time. However, something seemed to keep her from showing that she had given him a thought in that time. "Then I could have my position back?" was all she could say. Without answer, Greenfield continued to look at her in his queer searching way. She wondered if he knew what had happened to her and had heard in some way of her past trouble. She even felt that it would be best to tell him everything before he had a chance to ask her.

Then he spoke, and although his words brought little encouragement, yet she felt very happy to know that he was totally unaware of the details of her woeful experiences.

"I'm afraid, Hagar," he began, "that you can't have the position — that is, I don't believe I could fix it offhand. Maybe — in time; but there is another girl in the position now — she's had it since you left, and as she is fairly satisfactory to the firm, I couldn't — well, you understand, Hagar, don't you?"

He looked up at her. She hardly knew how to answer.

"Well, I'm sorry," she mastered at last.

She had never thought of this contingency.

"But don't be unhappy," he came back with a smile.

"I am still as fond of you as ever."

Quite before she thought, she said: "I'm awfully glad."

"Are you, Hagar?" he asked, as he looked at her steadily.

She thought that after all it would not be so difficult to get back her position.

Soon he leaned over to her, and grasped her hands impetuously, saying, once or twice, "Hagar, girl, I'm glad to see you."

Then he sat back in his chair.

"Where are you working now?"

"Why, I — was at Macy's."

"Don't you like it there?"

"Oh, I don't know. I want something different. The girls there get on my nerves. And then," she looked down at a little hole showing itself in her kid gloves, "I want more, something — I guess I can't explain it, only — well, I know I just can't stand back of a counter any more."

As he remained silent, she added: "I guess I am getting a little older."

Greenfield said very softly, "I understand, Hagar."

She noticed that his words were kind and gentle, and that he was smiling.

Then she cast her eyes upon the floor, waiting for him to say something. When she looked up, the smile was still on his face.

"Well, I guess I'd better be going," she exclaimed, restlessly, and arose from her chair.

He arose with her, and extended his hand. "I'm sorry, Hagar, that I haven't anything at the present time." When he patted her hand and wrists, there seemed real affection in his words. "Really, I am sorry, dear little Hagar. But I'll let you know if there is any chance. Will you step in to see me in a few days?"

She replied very earnestly, "Yes, I'd be glad to."

As she was walking through the door, he asked very casually, "Where did you say you were living?"

Hagar gave him her address, wondering if she would

have to explain how she came to be living in a new place. Then she saw him studying the name on the card.

"Yes, I use Mrs. Kennedy as a name now," she laughed lightly.

He gave a start. "Why, Hagar, you are not married?"

She laughed. "Good heavens, no. I only do that so — well, so they won't think it's funny because I stay in so much."

"Oh, I see," he answered; and then, more seriously, "All right, I'll remember, Mrs.— Kennedy."

They both went to the door laughing, for no apparent reason.

And Hagar was out in the hall already, and walking rapidly toward the elevator, when she heard Greenfield call her name. Looking back, she saw him still standing in the doorway.

When she had come nearer to him, he asked:

"What are you doing to-night, Hagar? Do you want to take dinner with me?"

A world of thought swept over her in that instant. So he did want her after all!

"Why, I'm sorry"—she stumbled on each word—"I've got an engagement for dinner to-night."

Her knees trembled, and he seemed to be standing there looking at her, enveloped in a queer sort of haze. She wondered how she could have been so audacious.

"Very well, drop in to see me any old time." The disappointment showed plainly on his face. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye." She took his extended hand.

Hagar was on the street, before she dared question herself as to the advisability of this procedure.

Something had told her it was the right thing to do, and would make him more anxious.

But when she reached home and sat alone in her little

room, she was more depressed than ever and wished she had not tried to be so clever with him.

Drawing a rocker up to the window, she sat for a whole hour looking out into the street below, comparing herself with a number of dirty-faced children, who were laughing and running along the curbing. When the bell rang for supper, she felt not at all hungry, deciding she would rather sit alone in her room, than go downstairs and listen to the boarders' conversations.

She sat there, thinking; thinking the wall paper was more greasy looking; the little carpet more worn; her own brown suit very shabby, after all her mending and pressing.

A knock at the door jerked her from her reflections. Somehow, she was really frightened, when she asked "Who's there?" Probably, she thought, from sitting quiet so long.

It was a note in Greenfield's handwriting, brought by a special messenger.

"Thank you," she said to the servant who brought it, and when the door was closed, she started a little frantically to tear it open.

Then she controlled herself, as if some hidden person in the room were observing her.

"You fool," she said to herself, and with more than necessary deliberation, tore open the envelope.

"Dear Hagar:

I am sending this note on a chance. I want to see you, and I don't believe you have an engagement. I'll stay at the address you know on Eighty-seventh Street to-night, so you can come as late as you want. It may be that you won't get this note much before nine o'clock anyway.

I am so anxious to see you. Don't be a fool, Hagar."

She looked at the piece of paper steadily for many

minutes. With a sudden determination she went over to the closet. "I believe I'll go," she said to herself, a feeling of pique, because he had so easily fathomed her lie to him, making her hesitate a moment as she reached up for a long grey veil. Then she exclaimed, a little savagely, "Oh, what's the use of fooling myself," and in a moment she had put on her hat and closed the door after her, and walked down the stairs to the street and subway.

After all, why shouldn't she go? It wasn't as if she had something else to fall back on.

However, she was just a little nervous, and when the man called "Grand Central," she arose with the crowd and walked up the steps before she was aware that she was getting off at the wrong station.

Then she saw by a clock that it was yet very early, and so decided to walk a few blocks. The glare of light Broadway-wards ended whatever thought she had to go into the station and wait.

A great sign of many thousands of incandescents, merged together in a crude representation of a bottle pouring a dazzling yellow stream from its mouth, attracted her attention, as she walked over Forty-second Street. A new kind of champagne, she read, and for a time was held fascinated by its changing colors, so dark and silent for a moment, then bursting into all its blazing glory.

"I'll get some of that to-night, I guess," she confessed to herself, smiling a little oddly.

She walked down the iron steps at the Times Square Subway Station, and into the crowded train, feeling quite in the spirit for an adventure.

The same negro woman, with her blue dress and spectacles, admitted her.

"Just come in," said she, and in a moment Hagar was inside Greenfield's room.

He was sitting by a large rocker drawn up in front of the grate fire, and when she came in, he arose and took her hands.

"Well, Hagar, I'm pretty glad to see you," he said.

At his request, she took off her hat and coat, and laid them on the back of a chair. Hagar noticed that as he offered to assist her, his manner was polite and gentle.

But they were hardly settled before the fire, when he began to ply her with questions.

"Now, tell me what you've been doing, where you've been, Hagar?" he said in one breath.

"Oh, there's not much to tell. I haven't been doing anything."

"Well — what about that fellow — Herrick? Wasn't that his name?"

Greenfield noticed that she reddened somewhat.

"Let's change the subject," she begged.

"As you say," he laughed. He was determined not to have the evening start off badly. "Only, I'm quite interested in what has transpired, Hagar. You can understand —"

"Oh, there is nothing to tell, just monotony, bored to death — that's all," she said slowly.

Sympathetically he exclaimed: "Poor Hagar!"

She threw her head back somewhat defiantly.

"Oh, I don't need pity."

"No?"

"No!"

"Then, you need — what? Love?"

Rather shamedly she looked at him from under her lids. Her moment of splendid defiance had vanished.

"Oh, maybe," she whispered.

"I am sure of it, Hagar," he exclaimed, grasping her hands.

Then he dropped his parleying manner.

"I believe you know why you came back to me, Hagar," he said earnestly. "You realized that I am fond of you. Yes, you thought about it a long while, and suddenly made up your mind that I love you. And you wanted to be loved; so there was nothing else for you to do but to come back home. Am I right? . . . I wonder," he went on, "if I've been a fool all this time, to keep on thinking and thinking of you, never forgetting you for an instant?"

He took out his watch and opened its lid. "You see, here's your picture — remember the one that was taken of all the girls? I cut yours out and had it enlarged."

He looked deeply into her eyes. "Tell me, Hagar," he asked softly, "was I a fool for thinking about you so much?"

Staring steadily ahead of her, she failed to answer.

"Was I a fool for thinking about you so much?" he repeated. "Look at me, dear."

Her head was bent low, and one hand shaded her eyes as she gazed into the fire, while the other lay stretched along the arm of the chair.

Gaining courage, Greenfield took her hand in his own, and remarked at its slight trembling.

Hagar did not draw away, but only said, "Yes, I *am* a little nervous to-night."

He felt the clasp of her fingers grow stronger.

Then she suddenly looked up into his face, with a greatly changed expression: "You're pretty good to me, after all, aren't you?"

She spoke with a good deal of the old childishness and appreciation, and Greenfield thought he had never heard her speak so sweetly.

"It's because I love you, dearie. I'd do anything on earth if I thought you loved me."

For a half hour they talked with friendliness and intimacy. Greenfield was determined to be gentle, suave and tactful; if he spoke too hastily, he halted, and went back into more control, as if he were following out some prearranged plan.

And Hagar was meek and quiet, never once letting him understand that she was thoroughly conscious of the situation.

While they were talking, the woman who had greeted Hagar in the hallway, knocked at the door.

"Did Mr. Greenfield want any wine?"

After a whispered order, he came back and sat again by her side. Hagar thought he was a little excited now, for he soon left his chair and went over to poke the fire, which was already burning very brightly.

"It is cosier when it's warm," he said.

Hagar watched him with interest.

Leaning against the mantelpiece, and with the iron tongs still in his hands, he stood quiet for a moment, regarding her.

"So, you are back home at last, little girl, aren't you?" he commenced. "It's pretty hard to realize."

With a playful toss of her head, she said, rather sweetly, "Is it?"

"Yes, you bet!" he said slowly.

He came over and stood back of her chair, and then, with both hands, slowly stroked her glowing black hair.

"You don't know how I have missed you — I have been terribly lonely, Hagar."

There was a thread of sadness in his voice.

"I am sorry, Mr. Greenfield."

"Why don't you call me by my first name?" exclaimed he.

"What is it?"

"You don't know!"

"No, honestly not."

"I thought I told you — then, or rather asked you to — one night, some place."

"I don't remember it."

"Well, you call me Ben. That's shorter than my whole name. Good heavens, what's the matter?"

Hagar had become suddenly pale and her face showed a sadness that made him start.

"What's the matter, kiddie," he asked, frightened lest some hidden meaning, some reminiscence brought by his words, had come out of the past to blight all the progress he had made.

"Your — Ben — made me think of something, that's all. It's all right now."

And she understood for the first time how it had come that she had named the little china doll. It surprised her when she realized that in all this time, she had not once been conscious in the similarity of names.

But to all his begging, she only gave the same answer:

"Oh, it's all right. It's nothing," even calling him "Ben," for the first time, just to pacify him.

Greenfield commented upon her vague explanation. "You see, you don't tell me anything," he said, as he drew a little away from the fire.

The light from the burning embers cast a soft crimson tint on his face, subduing the usual sallowness of his thick skin. In this light Hagar thought him not altogether unhandsome.

"Yes," he went on, "you don't tell me anything, Hagar. Everything is so mysterious. When I asked you about this fellow Herrick, you only say, 'Oh, he left the city.' If I ask you about your folks, or your job, or what you have done for over a year, it is always the same

answer. Why, Hagar, don't you realize that you need someone to tell the truth to. You can lie to most anyone you meet, but the truth —"

"It wouldn't do any good," she ventured. "If I told you the straight of it, it would be so strange you'd be sure I was lying. At least, now, you don't know whether to think I am lying or not."

Seeing it was best to let her have her way, he left the subject of their conversation to tell how hard he had tried to find her.

At that moment there was another knock on the door that led into the hall.

It was done in a gentle manner, being nearly inaudible, but it frightened Hagar immeasurably.

"You mustn't be scared," Greenfield said, as he noticed how startled she was. "It's only the maid."

Then he opened the door and the woman brought into the room on a black enamelled tray, a large bottle of champagne. When she went out they both laughed at the way Hagar had been scared. It served to make each understand how tense was the situation in the mind of the other. But at the same time, Hagar was conscious enough of her position, to look at his back, as he stood at the door, and wonder when he would begin kissing her.

As soon as the maid left, Greenfield walked across the room to the little table on which was placed the champagne.

Quite nonchalantly, he said, as he broke off the wire over the cork: "We must take some of this wine. We are both pretty tired and stupid to-night."

"Am I stupid, Ben," she asked childishly.

"I didn't mean that, I meant that *I was*," he apologized.

Now he took the neck of one of the bottles and wrapped a large napkin about it many times. Then he twisted

and turned it until the cork came out with only the faintest whisper of an explosion. When he poured the sparkling amber fluid into the two broad-bellied glasses, he showed that he felt rather proud of himself.

"You've got to open a good many bottles to do it that way," he remarked.

Hagar asked him why.

"Because there is so much gas in the bottles it would pop all over everything. You must do it slowly."

Coming over to where she sat, he placed a glass carefully on the broad arm of the chair. He did it with great precision and care.

"There," he said, "you'll like it. I don't believe it is too dry."

"What kind of wine is it?"

"Why, champagne, child, Pommery."

Then he raised the glass to his lips. "Here's — to our future happiness, Hagar," he said, looking directly into her eyes. "Go ahead and taste it."

"I have never drank champagne before," came from her doubtfully. "Would it make me drunk? I've always wanted to taste it."

He laughed. "Why, of course it won't make you drunk, go ahead and drink it."

A little longer she hesitated.

"Really, Hagar, you'll like it. A little champagne is the only drink for white people. Go ahead and drink it."

At last she obeyed him.

"Isn't it good?" he asked, after she had taken a swallow.

"It's — so funny. All the little bubbles come up and sting you in the face."

"See! I knew you'd like it."

She took the glass again in her hand and for a long time looked down into it, while she fingered the thin stem

in a gentle caress. Then she laughed outright and placed the glass to her lips. When she had taken it away, even the long stem was empty.

For a time they sat looking into the fire. Over Hagar there seemed to spread a gentle soothing feeling that veiled her body in peace, and made her more happy than she had been in months. Looking ahead of her, she caught her reflection in the mirror; and thought she had never looked so well since the days when she had been happy with Herrick.

Even Greenfield seemed handsome somehow, and as she looked out of the corner of her eye to catch his eyes studying her, she felt that she would have suffered his arm to be about her, had he enough sense to attempt it at that moment. He seemed so foolish, sitting there so quietly, when they were all alone.

"You know you have changed a good deal in the last year, Hagar," said Greenfield at that moment.

"Have I?"

"Yes. You don't think those high-minded things about life the way you used to. Now, do you?"

"Oh, perhaps not. A girl like me hasn't got so much chance in this world."

"I told you that a year ago."

"I am beginning to believe it now."

"Hagar, you mean it?" he cried, jumping up.

She was startled by this sudden impulse. "Why, what's the matter?"

"What you just said — about beginning to understand the way things really are. Do you think that way now?"

"Oh, I believe I do." Her answer was filled with weariness.

"Let's have another drink," he suggested.

Going over to the table, he again filled the shallow glasses. "Drink, Hagar," he said.

She took the glass from his hand. "Anyway, it is not bad tasting stuff," she laughed. And after a moment, like one who hesitates upon the brink of a cold pool, she gulped down the contents of the second glass, with a gesture that was full of abandon and daring.

Greenfield came over and sat on the arm of her chair.

"You're a great, wonderful girl," he exclaimed. "I swear I have been in love with you ever since the first moment I saw you."

Hagar's response was to look up into his face. His lips were near to hers, and in them was such an expression of strong desire, she could hardly resist lessening the distance that separated them.

Somehow, she knew that in another moment he would kiss her. But it seemed a lot of fun to hold off like this and tease him. And so she drew away instead, just to see the flash of self-reproach come into his eyes, because he had not grasped that moment.

They played for nearly an hour in this manner. Greenfield sat on the arm of her chair, while Hagar gazed contentedly into the fire.

Then they had another drink, and to Hagar the room seemed to be suddenly filled with a thousand noises, while her head whirled around and her heart matched up with it in riotous exultation.

So came the moment when restraint was thrown off entirely. They were launched on a sea of tumult and rapture. He had her in his arms, kissing her head, her cheeks, her lips, in a frenzy of passion.

It was no longer a chimera for Greenfield. The beautiful, soft arms were really around his neck, hanging limp; her body was throbbing close to his own, while Hagar, in her fast ebbing consciousness, kept repeating to herself, over and over: "How wonderful this is. . . . What a fool I have been."

For only a moment did Greenfield watch the drooping lashes, the quivering lips, the tremulous pulsation of her bosom. Then he lifted her into his arms, and despite a moment of slight resistance. . . . carried her into the next room.

CHAPTER XXV

HAGAR and Greenfield were three months together before the girl stopped to ask of herself whether her happiness was dearly bought, or had come by some benefactor's hand in the time of need.

Everything appeared to have come so gradually and to run so smoothly, she could hardly believe that it had not always been this way; and she never thought of its real value to her in the way of a fulfilment of her wants and desires. It actually seemed for a time that this affair with Greenfield was legitimate, and nothing unusual. It was only as the months went on that she found herself conscious of the same former longings and restlessness.

During the first few weeks she was slightly worried by the manner in which Greenfield would stop and study her. She was nearly tempted once to tell him the entire story about Herrick. But this action on his part, which seemed to her like suspicion, soon passed off, and she felt quite happy that she had been saved the confession.

Often after that she would walk up and down in the suite of rooms that Greenfield had fitted up, asking herself why she should be so foolish as to not get all the happiness that was to be obtained.

Curious indeed, was Hagar's state of constant unsatisfied longing. She did not stop to ask of herself the question: "Will I be happy?" but rather, "Shall I get that which makes others happy?"

Perhaps, had she placed a greater value on her body, like other women of mutability, she would have had a different viewpoint; would have been more practical in her

treatment of Greenfield. But now she merely used herself as a means to an end, with the end, an invisible, mystical thing in the perspective. Indeed, she was totally unaware of what process of reasoning she had used to gain a decision, or of the trend her resolutions had taken; she was really as unaware of her own resolutions as she was unaware of the intentions of her seducer that night on the star-lit bank of the Hudson. She tried to find no legitimate name for what might eventually happen, only going on blindly. And all the builded hierarchies of virtue tumbled unrecognized to her trodded soil.

Better living had its effect upon her. Since Greenfield always wanted her to look well, and trusted her so much that she was allowed accounts in two of the big stores, it was not long before a dormant talent for cleverly decorating herself became apparent. She spent much time in buying and looking at expensive garments worn by people whom she previously could only envy from her position back of the counter. And she spent a good deal of money. Appreciating Greenfield's confidence in her, it was only the knowledge of his implicit trust that kept her from taking greater advantage of him.

Another thing that troubled her, and probably kept her from being really extravagant, was a feeling she experienced whenever she bought a piece of goods, or a passementerie, that cost more than the usual price. A momentary spasm of guilt always shot through her at these times.

At the beginning of her companionship with Greenfield, she had even tried to overcome this feeling of faithlessness, by telling herself that she was really in love with him, but that her strange nature made it difficult for her to be demonstrative. Then, after many futile attempts, she gave up the task, only doing what she saw was necessary to keep him from growing too suspicious.

But she liked the life, and found much happiness in look-

ing pretty, not exactly because Greenfield was made happy, but because it opened up to her new vistas — fields for more ambitious endeavor. She realized now that all this new world of fine clothes and manners could be obtained by simply being clever.

Greenfield was really conscious of the change that had come over Hagar in the few months, but his own conceit gave him an entirely new name for it. When she walked out to a taxicab, and showed no longer the signs of her former humbleness and gratitude, but instead a look of defiance and indifference to every one about her, he was much pleased. Who else but he had brought out this queenly instinct in her? Mistaking her proud spirit and haughtiness for a sign of devotion to himself, he felt that he, too, was elevated along with her.

Hagar was very gay during those days. Instilled with confidence in her physical self, gained by a transmission of the words of regard given her by others, she displayed an innate talent for pleasure that surprised her quite as much as it did Greenfield. She grew to love the white lights and the marvellous entrances of the great hotels, spending hours in front of the mirror rehearsing her entrance into them.

She never paused to consider the possible price she was paying. Aside from her duty to Greenfield, the shirking of which was the only thing that troubled her, she remained free of care; and though, at times, she would ask herself if she ought not to consider him more, as a payment of his goodness to her, she would always feel easy of mind when she reasoned that the power of affection was something beyond her control.

One afternoon at the end of the winter, she suddenly met a girl whom she had known at Rheinchild's. Hagar tried to pass her without any sign of recognition, but before she could accomplish it, their eyes had met.

"Why, dearie," exclaimed the girl, "I am so glad to see you."

The girl eyed her, and then, after a moment, in which she had entirely surveyed Hagar, she said in a manner full of awe: "Why — you — where'd you get all the rags?"

Smiling in a superior manner, Hagar replied: "Why, you know I'm married — been married for nearly six months."

"I didn't know that. Well, you're pretty lucky, all right." She was unable to keep her eyes off the broad-cloth and furs.

They had a few more words, and when the girl left, Hagar stood for a moment rigid and silent. This was the first time she had come into a fragment of her old life, and the remembrance burst in upon her vindictively.

"Damn it! I had to lie," she exclaimed quite aloud. "What right had she to ask me, anyway?"

All the way back to the hotel, the strangeness of having to utter the untruthful words annoyed her.

Two days later, just as she was coming out of Tiffany's, she met Thatah. The tall, thin figure wore black clothes, and a hat trimmed in crêpe. More like an apparition Thatah seemed at that moment, and Hagar was too startled to ward off any of the many thoughts crowding her brain.

She grasped Thatah's arm. "Thatah, what's the matter? I haven't seen you for months. You are not in mourning!"

Thatah was quiet and sad. "Yes, sister, I'm in mourning," she replied.

Realizing that some calamity had befallen Thatah, and from a desire to appear sympathetic and interested, Hagar cried: "For heaven's sake, Thatah, tell me what has happened? I haven't seen you for such a long time."

"I tried very hard to get you, Hagar," Thatah said,

quietly. "I inquired at the boarding house where you lived, but they seemed to know nothing about you."

Then Hagar pointed to the crêpe. "Is it father's?" she begged.

Thatah answered very softly: "Yes, Hagar, he died four months ago."

"He died four months ago!" Hagar repeated mechanically, at the same time wondering why she could not think of some more intelligent question or sentence which would better show her grief.

"Yes. He had what the doctors called nephritis, with complications."

"Oh, how awful — how awful," moaned Hagar.

"Yes, it was awful. Thank God, it is all passed now."

Thatah spoke slowly, with a little break in her voice.

"He suffered so terribly at the last."

"Did he — ask about me?" Hagar faltered.

"Yes. He was fond of you always."

"He was fond of me, sister? I didn't know that," Hagar murmured.

After a moment of silence, Thatah asked where Hagar was living.

"I'm living at the Malvern Hotel. I'm — married now, you know." There was a return in Hagar's words of her usual spirit.

And now Thatah was startled. "You're married, Hagar?"

"Yes."

"Hagar, to whom?"

"Well, I think you remember him — Mr. Greenfield. I'm married to him."

"You married *him*!" exclaimed Thatah.

Hagar looked up.

"Of course. He was the only one that was really square with me."

Thatah was so bewildered, so perplexed, that the words had to fight their way to her lips. "Well, Hagar, it is all very strange — you married to Greenfield," she said finally.

They had stood at the side of the curbing for another few minutes, when a feeling of discomfort builded itself in Hagar to such an extent that she could no longer stand quietly and talk to Thatah. Somehow, she felt a sudden return to her old days of misery, and as she looked up and saw how sad Thatah appeared, how disheartened in spirit and shabby in dress she was, as compared with herself, she felt that she could no longer tolerate the painful contrast.

"Well, I must go now, Thatah," she said, restlessly. "I'm living at the Malvern on Forty-fifth Street." Her nervousness was overcoming her. "I wish you would drop in some time.

"You don't know how sorry I am about father," she went on, with her eyes cast down, ashamed of her absolute lack of response to Thatah's tears. "I wish I could do something." Extending her hand, she stammered: "Well, good-bye, Thatah. You do know how I feel about — about father's death — don't you?"

Thatah remained silent, and she added: "I'd really like to have you look me up, sometime."

She was well out of sight, before Thatah, who had been enveloped in a veil of reverie and wonderment, brought on by Hagar's strange action, turned and walked over to the Thirty-third Street Subway. And along the whole walk, she kept repeating to herself: "She never once asked about Edric." And as she thought on, and remembered the queer shifting of Hagar's eyes, and her eagerness to get away, she said, nearly aloud, "Yes, Hagar has surely changed."

Until she reached home, the picture of Hagar's radiant

health, her wonderful clothes and her delicate, refined manner, so utterly new, was vividly present. As she thought about it, she somehow felt old and shabby, in comparison.

The thoughts that pursued Hagar as she walked hurriedly up Fifth Avenue were of an entirely different nature.

A dozen times before she reached the hotel, the feeling of guilt so encompassed her that once or twice, she nearly stumbled. She kept muttering, "Good God — good God," and yet was unable to explain why she felt so culpable. The only thing that lightened her burden of selfishness, was the companionable rustle of her silk petticoat. It made her think of how much more fortunate, or better, more wise, she was than her sister.

But for days after this, the apparition of Thatah's thin figure and pale face was a burden on Hagar's soul.

And, somehow, it was this episode with Thatah that brought a fuller understanding, and a different meaning, to her disregard of Greenfield. Things seemed suddenly to have become more serious, and time more valuable.

One night, when Greenfield and she were going to the opera, she found it difficult to conceal any longer the fact that she was getting tired and wearied of having to appear responsive to his caresses.

When he came into the room, and said: "The opera, kiddie — everyone will look at you," she had a struggle to hide from him the shudder that swept through her. At that moment she wished she could have bravely told him exactly how she felt. Then she spied a blue silk evening dress hanging in the closet; it brought to her the old instinct of reasoning. With the same cold weariness, she answered: "Yes, Ben." How she wished she might have been free to walk up to him and say: "Ben, I'm sick of fooling you. I can't hold out any longer. Now, do what you please."

They were to play the "Rheingold," an opera with which Greenfield had become familiar, and as he left her, he hummed over boyishly, the music of the first scene, where the three water nymphs frolic in the deep waters of the Rhine. It made him appear in her eyes even more silly than before, and Hagar had to walk over to the window in an effort to get him from her mind.

However, she made her toilet that evening with an infinite care, reasoning there would be others who might watch her. She brought her black hair low down on her forehead, in a very new method; she put a little extra rouge on her cheeks, and a little bit more of extra coloring on to her lips, and when she put on her soft grey gown, with its quivering silvery rows of beads at the bodice, her happiness seemed to have come back again, with the music brought on by their faint jingle.

Greenfield came in long before she had finished dressing. Walking up and down the room, he looked at her with proud eyes, admiring the fingers, so small, so soft and well formed. There was even a feeling of envy in his heart as he watched them put a strand of hair in place, or fold themselves together.

When she was nearly dressed, she asked him to button her dress in the back, and after he had finished, he was so much enraptured he made an effort to kiss her. "Whee, you are beautiful to-night, Hagar," he exclaimed, exultantly.

But she drew away from him, and said: "Don't. You will spoil my hair. It took me an hour to fix it."

They reached the Opera House just as an announcement was being made that Romeo and Juliet would be played, instead of the opening drama of the Nibelung's Ring. One of the singers had a severe cold.

In a way, the announcement pleased Hagar a good deal, as she hated Wagnerian music intensely. Besides,

it always made her think of her father, sitting at the piano, with his shoulders humped and his head bowed.

Her mood changed completely as the performance went on. Enveloped by hazy clouds of romantic thoughts, she sat through the sad drama, likening herself and her lot to every situation in the play. When Romeo entered Capulete's palace, disguised as the pilgrim, she fell in love with him, quite as soon as did Juliet. She, too, became his lover, his champion, and she struggled through the duel with Mercutio, and then with Tybalt, with her heart beating in unison with each fiery challenge of their swords. It was *she* who awakened and stabbed herself to death with a dagger, when the fatal poison was taken in the fifth act: it was *her* heart that bled for the unfortunate lover.

Then, everything changed when the performance was over, and the curtain descended, and she saw again the fallow face and thick figure of the man at her side.

As they went down the broad marble stairs, after the performance, Greenfield noticed her agitation and explained to her that he too felt sad.

"It is full of tragedy," he said. "It makes a person think, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I should say it does."

"I was in the store the other day, and heard two musicians with long hair talking about it. What do you think one of them said?"

"I can't imagine."

"Well, one of them, he really must have amounted to something, said that it could be done in pantomime, or without the acting altogether. He said it spoilt the message, or something, and that to those who understood, the music speaks plainer than all the singing. I think he was crazy, don't you?"

"Well, I should say," answered Hagar.

Passing out into the street, Hagar accidentally brushed shoulders with a young blonde-haired person in a dress suit. The man's black clothes clung to his muscles, and moved like the skin of some animal with each step that he took. He was so clean looking, and his blue eyes were so fresh and sparkling, she felt the impulse gather in her to throw her arms around him. It had been long since she had felt a quiver brought on by anybody that had fascinated her.

For a moment, she and Greenfield were jostled by the crowd, and then she lost sight of the dark clothed figure altogether. With her attention no longer diverted, she looked up at Greenfield, only to see that beside the figure of the blonde young man, he appeared more sallow and weary than ever.

"Are you tired?" she asked. Her eyes were still searching through the crowd.

"Oh, pretty tired, I guess," he answered. "We had a hard day at the store. Was over to Newark. Bought out a dandy bankrupt lot—but we had to invoice the whole stock."

Hagar had to turn away to hide her feelings, and when she looked up again, it was to see just ahead of them, the carefully groomed man dart through the crowd and lift into an automobile a woman in a pale blue gown.

For a moment, Hagar stood watching the woman, thinking how she would have liked to be in the man's arms. Then she looked up at Greenfield again. His tie, at that moment, had unfortunately crept up on his collar.

"Yes, let's go home, Ben. I feel pretty tired, too."

There was a little quavering catch in her voice, a faint, wistful suggestion of her proud spirit bowing its head.

That evening at the opera, only added to the restlessness brought on by Thatah. During the following days, Greenfield noticed her unhappy mood many times—it

was made more apparent to him by her fits of absent-mindedness, her apparent lack of regard for him, even when he was talking to her.

Scenting now, some possible spell of chastisement or reproach on her part, he never left her alone for more than a few hours at a time, but instead, put himself out to be with her, even when his business demanded his attention. Organizing frequent shopping expeditions, he would make her buy things he knew would please her, even though she would not ask for them; he took her to the gayer places again, Churchill's, Maxim's, a little French restaurant in University Place, where he thought the lack of conventional life would divert her.

And so it was not long before she was gay and buoyant again, and he was proud and pleased over his ability to discern her feelings and control them.

Two or three months passed before Hagar really gave him an understanding of her feelings. And then, it was only to realize and become rather disappointed over the fact that she had such influence over him that he was powerless in her hands, and could not fight back. At the very height of this quarrel, Greenfield became so excited, he held his fist above her as if to strike her. And then he threw his hands over his eyes, crying: "Oh, my God, I can't — I can't."

But Hagar had become actually tired of trying to fool him. And to justify herself in her own eyes, or perhaps more to have places of refuge for her guilt, she began to hunt in him for possible fault. When he wore a hard, stiff bosom to his shirt, she looked around and compared him with the men that wore soft, finely plaited bosoms; she noticed that he wore high shoes in the evening; that his cuffs were not attached to his shirt, as she saw in the advertisements.

What made her most unhappy was that she was begin-

ning to have a certain sort of sympathy for him. His fits of sadness, into which his love for her plunged him, made her feel uncomfortable and a little disgusted with him, but she could not deny that she felt sorry and wished that she might for the moment be able to please him, and stop his worry, or better — that he cared less for her.

One morning at breakfast time, Greenfield spoke what had been on his mind for several weeks.

"I wish, Hagar," he said, "that you wouldn't flirt with people the way you do." He remarked in as casual a manner as possible upon her actions the night before, with a fellow named Kettle. All evening she had sat facing this friend of his, and whenever Greenfield happened to look up, it was to see her eyes deep in an encounter with the guest.

At first Greenfield's remark made Hagar angry. Then she said playfully: "You're not jealous, are you, dearie?"

"I don't like it," Greenfield answered.

This was in reality the first wedge driven against their continued companionship. In the next few days, there followed many little incidents, unspoken words, strange sidelong glances, that stored up in their cumulative efforts the beginning of the dénouement.

At the table, while Greenfield was lost in some selfish depiction of his own cleverness, she would watch and study him; while he glowed with self-satisfaction she would look at his mouth and eyes, and find in them great points of displeasure.

She began to be less cautious in keeping from him the idea that she was very tired of his kisses, his love-hungry eyes, the monotonous trips to the restaurants and hotels.

To herself, she commenced to argue now: "He thinks he owns me. Well, I'll show him."

A longing for excitement still breathed through her

being, but somehow what she was getting failed to satisfy her entirely. When she stopped to look at herself in the mirror, she would say: "I'm pretty young yet — what's the matter with me?"

She indulged frequently now in a sort of personal survey of herself. In her bath, she would lie thinking; while she dressed, she would question herself; and the only solace she would find, would be in the sheen of her silk dressing gown, or in the delicately colored underwear that she could not have had other than through Greenfield's aid.

Greenfield came home with a bad cold in his head about this time. Hagar was sitting in the bedroom reading a novel, when his violent paroxysms of sneezing at the door aroused her, and when he came into the room, she noticed his face was paler than usual, and his eyes bordered by thick reddened lids.

"Your boy's got a cold, baby," he said, as he took off his coat.

"Have you?" she replied drily.

He seemed so old at the moment, and his efforts to appear boyish bothered her. Greenfield noticed the lack of kindness in her voice.

"You are not very sympathetic to-day, kiddie."

"No?"

He looked at her. "No," he replied.

"Oh, I'm sympathetic all right. I'm just tired, I guess."

Greenfield went into the bathroom and when he came back, he drew up a chair very close to her.

"I had a funny experience to-day, Hagar," he began.

"What was it, Ben?" as she put her book down.

"Well, I was fiddling away in the office, not much knowing what I was doing, when I found myself scribbling away on the blotter." He paused for a mo-

ment. "It was very interesting, Hagar, because I honestly didn't know what I was doing."

When he paused again, Hagar said: "Well, what are you driving at?"

"I was making a plat of our — friendship, Hagar — and I got down to the word '*indifference*,' before I knew what I was doing. Then I pushed the thing away from me, and made up my mind that I was going to be a little meaner with you. And then, when I got in the elevator out there, I somehow saw your little figure, and your pretty face—" He gave a sigh, and then added: "That's all, Hagar. I've just found out what a fool I am."

"What's all that got to do with me?"

He turned his eyes out of the window in a strange way: "Oh, nothing, I guess."

After a time, he said: "It's gloomy in here. Why don't you make a light?"

"I like the twilight," she answered. "It makes you think."

"Think?"

"Yes."

"Of what?"

"Oh, things," she answered rather vaguely.

Greenfield arose and stood back of her chair, regarding her for a long time before saying anything. "Hagar, you don't care for me in the old way," he began.

"Why do you say that, Ben?"

"I'm sure of it. I couldn't be surer of anything than I am of that."

"You've no reason to say that."

She took a deep breath, as if pondering over something about which she had thought considerably. Then, she said, quite suddenly: "No, you've no reason to say that, and then I'm getting tired, anyway, of having you

come home every evening with a scowl on your face. I don't see why you can't be pleasant."

"Well, if I'm that way, I have a reason. Remember how you used to put your arms around me when I came in, and how we used to kiss each other? It's not that way any more, Hagar. I can't help noticing it. Why, you haven't said 'good night' to me for a week."

"Oh, well, people need a change. Maybe I'm getting a little tired. You know we've been together for a long while. Then you don't ever let me look at any one else anyway. I guess that's it," she added. "You're so jealous, I'm getting tired of it."

Greenfield grasped her hand. "Don't you understand that's because I love you, Hagar? If I didn't care for you, I wouldn't care what you did."

"But you are always happy when you're showing me off to others," she pointed out. "You think I am some sort of a toy, that walks pretty just for other people, Ben. Oh, I am getting sick of not having any fun. Maybe we've been together too much." She leaned over and rested her chin on her hands. After a time, she sighed, "I believe I ought to go away."

Greenfield had been conscious of the increasing bitterness in her words as she argued with herself. But now he was actually startled, exclaiming in tones full of anxiety: "You mean to leave me!"

Up to this moment, Hagar had not even the slightest inkling of such a desire. But now, in the instant, Greenfield's suspicion made a certain plan seem actually feasible. The suggestion opened up such a wealth of possibilities, she wondered why she had not thought of it herself.

Now she answered his question. "No, I don't want to leave you. I just want to go on a little trip. Then when I come back, maybe it will be different again. I've

thought about it for a long time. I'd go to — Paris, maybe, and pick up a few clothes while I was at it. I'd like to get some foreign things, anyway."

Her eyes were dancing as she worded the idea, and when Greenfield came over and sat on the cushion he had placed at her feet, she stroked his black, curly hair with long, gentle caresses.

"Why haven't you told me this before?" he asked. "You know, I've been wondering what was wrong."

He was happy again. And Hagar worked with every resource that lay in her being.

Taking hold of both his hands, she said: "I'm awfully fond of you, Ben. But you know we've hardly been separated for nearly a year. I've worried about it, too, fearing that such a thing might kill our love for each other altogether. And I didn't want that to happen — for we've had some pretty good times together, haven't we, Ben?" She spoke wistfully, and, as Greenfield thought, a little sadly.

"You poor kiddie," he answered, and then, "But why didn't you give me some idea of what was troubling you? I worried too, Kiddie. I was afraid you weren't caring for me. The other night you just sparkled when I brought in young Kettle. Something came into my mind that night that kept me awake for hours."

"What was it, Ben?"

"Oh, I thought — well, I thought that maybe I was a little too old for you."

"Foolish boy, you don't think that, do you?"

"No," he said, grasping her hand, "I believe I understand you now."

That night he sneezed and coughed so continually, that after a few hours, Hagar arose from her disturbed sleep and fixed for him a hot whiskey, and then turned

on the hot water in the tub, and made him take a hot foot-bath.

She was on the point of climbing back into bed, when she happened to look into the bathroom.

He was half asleep, his head hung loosely on his shoulder, while the light from the single incandescent accentuated every haggard line in his face.

She didn't go off to sleep, and when he came into the room, told him she thought she would make her bed on the davenport. "I believe I might catch your cold," she explained.

"You're right," he answered drowsily, a little dazed from the effects of the whiskey and the heat of the bathroom. "I don't see why I didn't think of it."

Hagar found sleep that night impossible.

"I've got to get away," was her one thought.

It was only after she had decided not to wait much longer, that she found any rest.

The subject of a trip abroad was the main topic of conversation for the next few days.

"Oh, you'll be proud of me when I come back," she told him. Then she would do a sweeping entrée in some long-trained Parisian gown, while Greenfield looked on beaming, pleased with the return of her lost spirit.

A stop was put to their preparations, however, when a business deal in Chicago necessitated Greenfield's absence from the city for about a week.

Hagar took him to the Pennsylvania Terminal amid a storm of protestations, though she was more concerned about the break in her own plans than about his leaving her.

"Oh, I'll be back before you expect me, little one," said he, and when he left there were actual tears in her eyes, which he perceived eagerly.

"You poor child," he remarked brokenly, and refrained from further comments lest she perceive his surging feelings.

When the porter grasped his satchel and said: "Better leave, Mister, ain't got much time," Greenfield could hardly hold up under his feelings.

He took Hagar's hand, and whispered: "Well, Hagar, don't worry, I'll be back soon." He looked directly into her eyes. "Will you miss me, Hagar?"

She breathed a faint, wondering, "Yes."

At that moment Greenfield seemed to break completely. He placed both of his hands on her shoulders.

"Good-bye, darling."

"Good-bye, Ben."

"I love you, Hagar. Do you love me?"

"You know better than to ask that, dear," she answered softly.

Resolutely turning away, he passed through the iron gate, while Hagar watched his set shoulders and head, and thought to herself that for a man he was taking their parting rather foolishly.

When Greenfield settled himself in his seat, his temples were throbbing. An ecstasy of happiness pursed through his being. It seemed that Hagar was really fond of him again, and a hundred times he recalled and clung to the memory of the tears in her eyes, and the softness in her voice as she bade him good-bye.

Throughout the entire journey, each changing bit of scenery, all the quiet of the fields and meadows, brought to him mystic symbols from his beloved. The forests were woodlands where shepherds piped love's meditations; the little stringed ribbons of water that sparkled in the sunlight, as the train rushed over them, were silvery strands that carried his messages across the open country.

For the first time in his life, he refrained from entering the conversations in the smoking-room, finding the talk there, stupid and inane.

He was happy and exultant in his loneliness, and when the train puffed its way into the Union Depot at Chicago, he was queerly sorry that he could not have had a longer time to dwell amidst his solitary reflections.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE night that Greenfield left, Hagar sat in a rocking chair by the window until nine o'clock.

Then it seemed that she could no longer endure the loneliness or the emphasis of it, brought on by watching the moving crowd on the street below. Since Greenfield had left, she had sat wondering if she would have to spend nearly a week shut up in her room in the lonesome hotel.

Her mind worked quickly, propelled by some hidden yearning of which she was not even conscious.

Why hadn't Greenfield realized how lonesome she would be, and planned some way out of it for her? To go away without thinking of what she would endure, showed his selfishness.

Immersed in a flood of thought, which soon passed into anger, she went to the telephone and called for Kettle at the Hotel Astor.

Luckily, he had stopped in, to change his clothes for the evening.

In a moment she had explained to him how lonesome she was — how she had sat looking out of the window for three hours — that Mr. Greenfield had left for Chicago, and that — she didn't know why she asked it — but if he had nothing else better to do, perhaps he would not mind stopping in to keep her from being so lonesome. She added that this was the first time Mr. Greenfield had ever been away from her — since they were married.

Her eyes fired and her cheeks colored, as she tore off her tailored suit and put on a plain evening gown of dark grey silk. In the one-half hour she took to dress,

her heart vibrated harmoniously and her mind sang songs she had never known existed. Nor did she stop to ask herself the reason for this feeling of light-heartedness.

"A gentleman in the parlor, Mrs. Greenfield," the telephone operator whispered.

"I'll be right down."

In another moment, she had finished her dressing and walked gaily to the elevator.

Kettle stood in a corner of the parlor, awaiting her. When he greeted her, he held her hand a little long, looked into her eyes very deeply, then said: "I'm so glad you thought of me in your lonesomeness, Mrs. Greenfield."

He had looked deep indeed into her bright eyes. In five minutes, she thought they would go out to some café, as he suggested. It was best after all that they should not stay in the hotel, because . . .

"I understand," he smiled. "Let's go out to a little bohemian place I know of. You'll like it there, and I'm nearly starved."

It was so good to be with him. He didn't treat her quite as kindly as did Greenfield, but that was only a relief. There was a deference in his manner, and a certain tone in his words, which immediately made her feel close to him.

When he helped her into the cab, he did it as if he knew how. And though there was a moment when his arm was quite about her, she did not mind it in the least—he did it in so careless a manner, she was sure he was unconscious of it.

In the cab, he didn't speak of Greenfield, and he did not flatter her and compliment her, as Greenfield did. Instead he talked of different things, an interesting man and wife episode that had just come to his ears, a de-

licious bit of intimate gossip concerning a star at one of the Broadway theatres. He talked so well, dwelt so lightly upon the most intimate gossip, slithered so completely over any chance for her embarrassment, that she felt comfortable and happy in his companionship without once searching for the reason.

When Greenfield had talked this sort of thing to her, she remembered his eyes would sparkle, as if he were proud of the privilege of being the only one who could talk of intimate things to her. And yet this man said much the same things, only Kettle, it seemed, was really made unhappy by being compelled to mention anything that might make her feel uneasy.

Hagar thought over this comparison all the way to Thibeau's.

When they reached the little Frenchman's place, Kettle took her up the narrow stairs to the second floor, where many small tables had converted a front bedroom into a dining parlor.

They were greeted by M. Thibeau, who recognized Kettle at once.

"Ah, bon soir, Monsieur. Je suis heureux de vous voir," he said, as he bowed them to a little table set in an alcove.

After they were seated, and the proprietor's assistant had very graciously placed upon the table the plates, knives, forks and spoons, the polite Monsieur explained to them that just that day had some elegant escargots been obtained.

For a moment Kettle and the man indulged in a conversation concerning the dinner, while Hagar looked upon her companion with admiring eyes. It was the first time she had ever had for a friend one who spoke a foreign tongue.

As the waddling little Frenchman made his way to the

kitchen, Hagar exclaimed gleefully: "Oh, isn't this just great!"

"I come here often," Kettle replied. "There's something cheerful about this place. And then you hardly ever meet any one."

"You come here alone?" she questioned.

"Sure. Why not?"

"Oh, I shouldn't think any one would want to go about alone. It's — so lonesome."

Kettle pulled his chair closer to the table, and in the dim light from a flickering candle under a red shade, he looked steadily at her.

"I wonder if you know what it means, Mrs. Greenfield, to be in a place — like this, where everything is so quiet and so charming. You know I'd rather come here alone than bring some one who'd spoil the harmony of it. To me, coming here is like getting into — a bed of rose leaves — now, I wouldn't want to deaden the fragrance of the place by bringing in a sunflower, or a daisy, would I?"

She saw instantly the subtle compliment.

"So, thinking I belong in *this* flower-bed, you bring me?"

"Exactly."

"Well, you say it very nice," she laughed.

"Oh, I mean it," he answered, and she noticed that he had suddenly become very serious.

After there had been nearly a minute of silence, broken only by his steadfast gaze into her eyes, she said: "I would like to come to this sort of place oftener."

"Why don't you?"

Hagar thought for a moment. "Oh, he always wants to go to the big hotels, and parade me in front of the gang."

"Who do you mean?"

"Why — Ben — Mr. Greenfield."

"And you don't like that?"

She hesitated before she answered him. "Well — I suppose I —" then she blurted on with her little jaws set hard, "No, I hate it. *This* is the kind of thing I like."

The waiter brought in a big tray, filled with many little dishes; small sardines, cold liver, onions, radishes, and sausage.

After the man had arranged the tray on the table, Kettle asked him to bring some caviar.

"What did you just say to him?" Hagar asked, eager to pick up a word of French.

"Oh, I told him to bring some caviar, along with the hors-d'œuvre."

"With the what?"

"The hors-d'œuvre — those things." He pointed to the numerous little trays.

"Oh, I see," she cried.

She didn't really understand, but felt that she couldn't show before him any greater ignorance than he had already discovered. At that moment she was even a bit ashamed of herself, and wondered why this suave, clever man should be attracted to her.

"Of what are you thinking?" he asked, as he saw her gazing, vacantly.

"Oh, forgive me. I — was just thinking — I've got a lot to think about."

Kettle regarded her beautiful eyes, her quaint, childish mouth, for what seemed to Hagar an interminable time. Then he said: "You mustn't think too much, child. You might change the current of things. You know everything goes along all right, if we only leave it alone."

He was smiling at her kindly. She could see how white were his well-formed teeth.

"Don't you think so?" he asked.

She thought a moment, then replied honestly: "Oh, it's too deep for me. But it seems that there are so many worries, that if I just let things go alone, I get to worrying, thinking I ought to do something about it, or ought to worry more than I do. You know what I mean?"

"Sure," he smiled. Leaning over the table, he touched her hand gently. "Let's get a bite," he said earnestly. "I really haven't eaten anything since three o'clock."

And for fear that he might observe that she had already eaten, and not wishing to spoil their dinner, she too began eating, as if she were very hungry.

He exclaimed: "We're both pretty hungry, aren't we?"

"I should say we are."

"How'd you like to eat here every night, like this?"

"It would certainly suit *me* all right," she replied, looking up from her food.

In good crisp French, Kettle ordered a quart of champagne of some special vintage, which made the waiter smile and say: "Oui monsieur — oui monsieur," several times.

"You'll drink a little, won't you, Mrs. Greenfield?" he asked, after the waiter had disappeared through a door at the back of the room.

"Why, I don't mind," she answered.

The dinner passed along nicely. The wine dulled the process of preliminary acquaintance, the food justified the practical side of their being together.

"You know, people don't know how to live," he remarked, as he finished a toast to the evening. "They

fret and bother, and only hunt for situations that will make them miserable and unhappy. When they come across a little fun, they hunt up all the things that *might* happen, and they worry about that end of it so much, that when they really do anything a little out of the ordinary, it is more like a task than anything else.

"They think about it too much, and then, of course, they have to carry off the job just like anything else that is planned."

"You think people ought to go ahead, then, and do whatever they just happen to think of?" A vague suggestion of Paris was floating in her mind.

"Why, yes. If they think of it, then it is all over. They wouldn't be happy unless they'd go do it."

Hagar was silent for a long time. "I believe you are right," she said at last.

Kettle helped her to another glass of wine.

"But let's not talk of life," as he raised his glass on a level with her eyes, and proposed a toast: "One never gets any place. We'll just be happy!"

She looked across the table at him. He was so kind looking, and his eyes seemed so soft and gentle, although there was about his mouth an expression of sadness that played back and forth around the corners. However, this added to his manner a good deal of strength. Then she noticed how well he was dressed. His shoulders seemed so narrow and boyish, and his white collar fitted him so snugly, and was so close together in front.

She was deep in reverie, when a question from Kettle startled her — although she had been conscious of his eyes for a long time.

"I wonder if you are happy, Mrs. Greenfield," he asked earnestly.

She looked at him, a little puzzled.

"Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I don't know. I just am interested, I guess."

Kettle saw her face cloud, and then settle into less happy lines. "Well, I suppose I am happy — sometimes."

Gently he took her hand, remarking: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you unhappy by asking that." Then he loosened his grasp very suddenly.

"Oh, it's all right," Hagar said quickly. "I just haven't got very good control of my feelings, I guess. And I" — she looked away from him — "I have a lot of things to make me unhappy, if I stop to think of them."

"What are they? Tell me?" He leaned across the table.

"Oh, I can't tell them — offhand."

Her eyes fell to where she was gradually unravelling a silken cord that hung twirling from the wine list. A strange feeling was swelling and receding within her.

Kettle kept politely away from her. His only show of affection had been the one gentle touch of her hand. It made Hagar wonder, in a bewildered way, if he didn't care any more for her than that. She wondered why he had jerked away from her so suddenly.

"Is it that you don't want me to know?" she heard him say.

"Oh, I — I do — want you to know."

He said a little heavily: "You mean that?"

Then he beckoned with his eyes to the waiter for another bottle of champagne. As he turned to her, he said again: "You mean that?"

"Yes, I guess I do," she whispered. Her voice was full of resignation and weariness, as though she were tired of some inward struggle.

"Then tell me."

"Oh, that's not so easy."

"Tell me, child."

"Well — oh, I can't — tell you."

He leaned over and seized her hand somewhat roughly.

"You've got to tell me."

"Well — you know — well, I'm not married to — oh, God! I can't say it!"

. . . Hagar reached the Malvern Hotel at three o'clock the next afternoon.

"I've been out to New Rochelle," she told the clerk.

"Some friends took me out in a machine."

When she reached her room, she sat by the window until dusk.

Back and forth she rocked, taking deep, slow inhalations from a cigarette.

There had come a change in her life. Something perplexing — yet good — a rift in the lute.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE following letter Hagar received on the third day after Greenfield's departure:

" My darling Girl:

I've got the dickens to tell you. It's this: I won't be East for three weeks, possibly four. Just this morning, I received a long wire from the old man, who says that I must go to 'Frisco immediately, even if I leave things rest here until I get back. A big department store out there, is going out of business, and he thinks it's a great chance to buy at less than forty cents on the dollar. What can I do? You know how I feel about it, kiddie. I miss you more than I can tell. At night everything is so empty, and I get so rotten lonesome. This is my last trip, you can bet on that.

Now, you might think that you could join me, and that we could have a lovely time, going out to the Coast together. Well, darling, you know I would do that if I could. But I'm known out there, and you can understand—they know I'm not married. Anyway, it might make a fuss, and maybe queer things. So here are my plans: I am going to make up for being such a bad boy. Listen. Since it may be nearly a month before I get back, I want you to pack up and get over as much of that Paris stunt as possible. You can do all that you want in six weeks, counting going and coming, and then I'll only have to be alone in New York for a couple of weeks after I get back. I don't believe I could stand it much longer than that, anyway. You know what New York is in the summer time.

I know you will think these plans O. K. You must send me a letter every day, or a night wire, and of course, a telegram when you sail. As you see, I am here at the Annex now. My address will be c/o St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco.

As for money, I will write immediately and tell the Bank to fix up a letter of credit for you for one thousand dollars. How's that? Now, how much do I think of my little baby?

Be sure and write me right away to 'Frisco. Also, don't forget the telegram.

Your lonesome boy, with love,
BEN.

P.S.— I think maybe I'll make it for twelve hundred.

Take one of the Hamburg-American boats, as we talked it over. I hear they've got a band on them. Just now the bell boy brought me a folder. The *Kaiserin Augusta Victoria* sails the 20th, and the *President Lincoln*, another pretty good boat (I just called up the agent and he says it is very good, and not as expensive as the *Kaiserin*) sails the 24th. Let me hear.

You don't know how hard it is, to feel that we are both going farther away from each other. Kiddie, I never knew how much I missed you until now. It has set me to thinking a lot. We've been together a long while, and know each other pretty well, don't we? And I guess we get along pretty well, considering everything. Well, when I get back, I'm going to speak to you about something. My guess is, it will surprise you a lot. But I can see now what kind of a life I was leading before we went together. Can you guess what I mean?"

How she studied over it. In her mind was the question as to whether his goodness to her should make her stop her perfidy, or whether it was not now an easier thing to simply follow the plans he laid out for her.

Somehow, she wished she had received that letter before going with Kettle. But now — what action could make it right? His weakness seemed all of a sudden a strange argument against her taking advantage of him. Like a huntsman she felt, who will not kill a bird unaware of his presence a few feet off, but who hesitates not at all to kill a score on the wing.

It would not be very difficult to leave Kettle. But

somehow, his clever attentions seemed to bring out something big and honest in Greenfield's crude ways.

For the whole day, she stayed in her room, trying to decide. Back and forth she reasoned. Was it right to take the money, just after she had been so false to Greenfield? Then, what good would any money do — if she did not lie to him? After all, she only wanted to leave, because he was boring her. And if he didn't give her the money, she wouldn't be able to go. Would she not be foolish to let a chance like this slip by? Why couldn't she take the money, have a good time in Paris, and then come back? Everything would be just the same, then, and if Greenfield would give her these trips once in a while, maybe she could hold out with him. That was a point she had never considered. It was really Greenfield whom she was doing a favor.

Hagar thought of Paris now more pleasantly. She saw that she had been a fool to worry about it, even to hesitate. It was a good deal like what Kettle had told her, about people who spoiled their pleasures for themselves.

It would be wonderful to go to Paris. She would go to the best hotel, to the opera, people would look at her and wonder who she was, always alone. Maybe — she wouldn't always be alone . . . A soft voice, enticing, alluring, came to her as she pondered, as if blown along on the crest of the evening winds; and it said: "You fool, take advantage of the opportunity. Who knows what Paris will bring? Maybe —"

Still thinking, Hagar went out on the little stone balcony and looked at the blue sky, fading into grey. Her thoughts seemed to bring her into a limitless space, where torrents of ecstasy were bursting tumultuously over her in some giant waterfall. Standing there in the open air, she felt queerly thrilled.

Hagar was never busier than she was the next day. Having retired quite early, after telling Kettle she could not see him, she was very fresh and determined, and followed Greenfield's advice to the letter. By noon time she had booked her passage and drawn the money, as he suggested. A letter by special delivery had already reached the Bank from Greenfield.

The afternoon she spent in numerous fittings of a mauve colored travelling suit, which she bought ready-made in a Fifth Avenue shop.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when she reached home, but she began packing immediately. Exultant and happy, she danced about the room. "I'm going to Paris, I am going to Paris." Each bit of clothing, as she placed it in the large cabinet trunk, sent back an echoed reply.

By the night before she sailed, everything had been attended to. And to make sure that nothing would happen to her letter of credit, she placed it in the bottom of her trunk, under some old shoes. Even then, she felt so uneasy about it, she made an extra trip to Hoboken, to see if the trunk had arrived at the docks.

The steamer sailed at ten o'clock in the morning. They told her it would be a good idea, to be on the safe side, by getting on the boat much earlier, around seven-thirty or eight o'clock.

So she planned to go to bed very early, and finished her dinner by seven o'clock.

And only after Hagar had reached her room, and found herself unoccupied for the first time in three days, did she think of Kettle, and feel that she had not been fair to him.

She was rather glad, then, when a bell boy brought up a message from him, written on the hotel paper.

"I'm downstairs. I can't understand what's come over you. Come down, or I'll come up."

The boy was hardly out of the room before the telephone bell rang.

"What's wrong?" he asked. "Will you come down, Hagar?"

"I've been so busy. Where are you?" she answered.

"I'm downstairs. Shall I come up?"

"Oh, you can't come up, but if you'll wait, I'll come down."

"Why — haven't — you seen me?"

"Oh, really, I've been so busy. I'm going over — I'll tell you when I come down."

She paused for a moment, not knowing whether she was really happy after all at hearing from him. Somehow, she wanted to be quiet, in the darkness of the room, wanted to think and dream of the trip.

Her hat was not yet on, when a knock came at the door. Thinking it was the maid, she said: "Come in."

Kettle quietly opened the door, came over to her, folded her in his arms for a heavy, passionate embrace, and then, quite as nonchalantly, took off his gloves and laid them on a chair with his hat and cane.

"I couldn't see the use of hanging around down there in the parlor — with Ben in 'Frisco," he laughed.

"I think he gets there to-night," she answered. "But you shouldn't have come up. I don't think it's good policy, do you? He's such good friends with the clerks."

"Oh, it's all right. You've got a sitting-room here, anyway. They couldn't say anything."

"You don't know, Ben," she answered.

He thought she said it rather derisively, while to Hagar's mind there came a thought that it would have been impossible for her to go to bed so early, anyway. She

added: "But, really, I'm awfully glad to see you, just the same."

"I tried to get you a dozen times yesterday and the day before. They always said you were out."

"Yes, I know. I've been busy getting things ready."

"Ready?"

"Yes, I'm going to Europe."

"To Europe? Good heavens! What next? Are you really?"

"Surely. Going for about six weeks or so."

Kettle was too astonished to speak for a full minute.

"Why — what's become of Greenfield?"

Hagar explained everything to him, even telling how guilty she felt by taking Greenfield's money. When she had finished, Kettle seemed very disappointed.

"I thought you were going to stay in town this summer. I'll miss you," he said dejectedly.

While Kettle talked to her, he noticed that she was very restless, going to the window and gazing in an abstract way. At last he said: "You've certainly been acting queer, Hagar. And now you're so restless. What's the matter with you?"

She turned to him, exclaiming suddenly: "Oh, I don't know. I just wish you'd go downstairs. Somehow, I feel nervous having you up here."

He took his cane and hat. "As you say. Where will I meet you?"

"Down in the parlor. I'm sorry, but I believe I'd feel better."

Just for a moment he looked at her. Then he put his arm around her. "My God, child!" he exclaimed. "A man could be trampled on till his bones were dust by some other woman, yet there's something in you that would make him do over again all the ghastly things."

At that moment came Greenfield — tired, anxious, up

to the desk of the office downstairs. He greeted the clerk: "Hello, Charlie."

"Why, Ben! I thought you were going to 'Frisco. Your wife just told us that to-day."

"Changed my mind. Couldn't stay away." He laughed a little shamedly, and then asked if Mrs. Greenfield was in the room.

The clerk looked around, on to the high cabinet-like key rack. "Guess she is — the key's not here. Have a good trip?"

"Well, fair. Lost out on a big job lot in 'Frisco, right at the last minute. Don't know as that I'm sorry, though."

The clerk gave an order to the porter about sending the grips up to the room.

"Oh, better wait — say — five minutes," said Greenfield, blushing like any schoolboy lover. "I just want to surprise her."

He went into the elevator.

"Howdy, Mr. Greenfield," grinned the black-faced elevator boy.

"Howdy, Clarence."

"Thought youse 'ud be in 'Frisco by this time."

"Changed my mind, Clarence."

"Yessah, yessah. Fif' floor, Mr. Greenfield."

Ben Greenfield walked hurriedly and softly down the padded carpet to his door, and was on the point of opening it when a thought struck him that it would be a greater surprise to Hagar, if he came in through the bedroom door. And so, very gently, he walked back and unlocked the door at the other end of their suite.

For a moment he stopped to better control himself, and then tiptoed to the curtain leading into the parlor. "She'll be in the rocker by the window, I'll bet a dollar," he said to himself.

He pushed aside the curtain.

Outlined against the glare that came in through the window from an electric sign upon a near-by building, there were two figures in a close, silent embrace.

One impulse after another crowded in upon Greenfield's devastated senses.

Then he silently crept back into the bedroom. They had not noticed him. With a smothered cry he threw himself across the foot of the bed.

In the next room, the figures in the dim light were parting.

"I'll be in the parlor," said the man. "Hurry."

"I'll be down in just a minute," she answered.

Possibly premonitions are exact combinations of thought molecules, possibly there is some psychic force, some moral, psychic life that presupposes the integrity of the brain. At least, there came to Hagar, as Kettle left her, a renewed feeling of impending calamity. It seemed to be at its height the moment she shut the door after Kettle.

And it was in a state of bewilderment and daze, of blind walking into tragedy, that she went into the room where Greenfield lay sobbing on the bed.

She was not startled by his presence. She even gave no sign of inward disturbance. It may have been the feeling of guilt, which, like a narcotic, had dulled her senses.

For a minute, she stood at the side of the bed, regarding him. When he sat upright, and cried: "Good God," she turned and silently went over to the dresser.

"Now, don't make a scene," she muttered. "Control yourself."

She told herself that he would do her no harm. He was too afraid for himself and of consequences. In that second of reflection, she even lost a little respect for

him when she realized that he had been too cowardly to assault the other man.

"Who — was he — tell me!" he cried at her, hoarsely.

"Didn't you see him?"

"No, it was too dark."

"Then I won't tell you."

"You damned —"

The telephone gave a thin little ring, and like a lost waif in a storm, made its way into the room.

Greenfield jumped up and ran to the 'phone, while Hagar did not move. "What's the use?" she was thinking.

At the 'phone, he cried: "Well, what is it?"

Even Hagar could hear the little brass voice: "Is this 521?"

"Yes, 521."

"Mr. Kettle left his gloves. He says to bring them down when you come."

Greenfield dropped the receiver and turned on her savagely.

"So — it's Kettle!" he screamed at her. "Oh, to think — I never even suspected —"

There was a little sneer on Hagar's face as she turned away. "I have nothing to say. You thought you'd play a trick on me. You see what you get."

Then she turned on him savagely.

"And I swallowed your story whole. I suppose I would have believed you — if you said you were going to Honolulu." She snapped her fingers defiantly in his face. "However, I care — that much," she remarked with the action.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HAGAR's show of defiance completely overwhelmed Greenfield. For many minutes he was unable to word any one of the thoughts that came rushing into his brain. His face had become woefully haggard, his eyes circled by rings that were more than ever yellowish and discolored.

"I'm going down to see Kettle," he said, as he found his way to the door, while Hagar stood silently by the window, not a muscle of her body betraying the anger and passion she felt. He had tricked her, she reasoned, and her sense of self-judgment at that moment was as impervious as a steel casket.

It was the end. She saw that plainly. And she did not regret it. It had only been toleration on her part that had kept off just such a climax through all the months.

For a time she stood perfectly rigid, wondering what would happen to Greenfield, and then as he failed to return, and nearly an hour passed, she became nervous, and turned on all the lights in both rooms.

When she could stand it no longer, she went to the 'phone and managed to rouse the sleepy operator.

"Is the clerk there?" she asked.

"The clerk lives in Harlem," came the answer.
"What's the matter?"

"Oh — nothing."

Of what good was it to tell her troubles to the sleepy operator?

Greenfield, drunken and sotted, came struggling into the room about three o'clock. He managed to gain

the bed, and then threw himself across the white cover, utterly collapsed. His collar was torn off, his eyes were bloodshot, his face bruised, where he had evidently fallen to the pavement.

Hagar stood looking at him. And then, when he began to moan, she ran to the window. The faint grey of dawn was beginning to peep up behind the Times Tower.

Her path lay ahead of her, cleared and free of all obstacles. When she actually realized how simplified matters had become, she was even a little startled. He was drunk, it would last until noon at any rate. She would sleep a couple of hours, dress, get a cab, and be off — for Paris. After all — how lucky!

In a moment she had flung off her greyish tailored suit and undone her lustrous black hair. Then she took a pillow from off the bed, and lay down upon the couch in the parlor.

At six o'clock she awakened spontaneously. The sun had already penetrated into the room and she drew the curtains down to keep out the light. Then, to reassure herself, she slipped into the bedroom. But Greenfield lay snoring in an anesthetic-like stupor, his senses still drowned by the frenzied drinking in which he had indulged.

In a half hour, she had bathed and dressed, and packed her hand satchel, ready for departure. It was like a thief in the night that she stole out of the room, and she was already near the elevator when a troubling thought beset her that made her turn back. She remembered that she had not stopped to see, at the very last moment, whether or not he was breathing. Supposing — that he had drugged himself, taken an over-dose, perhaps — would she not be accused, if they found him dead?

This thought sent her back in a frenzy of fear and indecision. She crept back to the room, and nearly flung

herself upon Greenfield's breast to listen to his heart.

Though his snoring was stopped, he was breathing regularly and deeply.

"What in the world is wrong with me?" she questioned aloud of herself, wondering if at the last moment she was losing her nerve.

Again, she was in the hall, near the elevator, when she turned back a second time, actually deciding that it was not right, to her conscience, that she leave him without a word of parting. She wanted to start her journey without any conscience burdens.

Hurrying into the room, she scribbled off at the writing desk, a note:

"I am leaving. Goodbye. You should never have deceived me so; it might have gone on all right, otherwise. But it's all over now. Anyway, I thank you for the money."

"That will teach him a lesson," she muttered to herself. "He'll think I care."

She put the note in his half-folded fingers, and after an instant of reflection, which ended with a kiss on his forehead, she ran out of the room.

At ten o'clock the big steamer was groaning its passage through the waves, out into the open bay, while Hagar, alone in the confines of her gloomy little cabin, was wondering why she felt so unhappy.

But her feet were keeping accurate time with the in-harmonious measures that came down to her from the German band on the upper deck.

CHAPTER XXIX

HAGAR's trip across the ocean was a dull affair. For four days on end, rain and dripping fog submerged the ship and its passengers in a heavy gloom. Then a period of rough weather followed, quite as unrelenting in its pursuit of the plodding steamer.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, she attempted to go into the larger salon, but a spell of sea-sickness prohibited this diversion. Until the day they were entering port, then, she lay in her little cabin — feeling that she would die of inertia and illness, unless calm weather came.

When she stepped out upon the upper deck for the first time, she was pale-faced and weak. And after half an hour, illness compelled her to go back to her bunk again. As she lay there, gazing dully at the wooden bottom of the unoccupied berth above her, she felt lonelier and more forsaken than she had been for many months. It seemed that some one were punishing her for being so anticipative of this trip to Paris.

However, late in the afternoon, her feelings improved so much that she dressed and again went upon the deck.

And now was brought some color into the unceasing array of drab.

The deck was slippery, and as she stepped out upon it from the narrow doorway, she might have fallen had not some one at her elbow caught her by the arm and steadied her.

Then her rescuer said: "It's a head wind, and the deck is like a skating rink."

When she had recovered from her momentary fright, she responded to the man's courteous assistance. Looking at him with a smile, she said, very softly: "You are very kind. I really might have hurt myself."

He tipped his cap to her and started off in company of two others who had stood by waiting for him.

On the promenade that lasted for nearly an hour, the man passed her a dozen times, with his eyes speaking acquaintanceship each time as he passed. When she sat down to rest in one of the deck chairs, it was only a moment before he was by her side.

"Do you feel all right?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. I didn't hurt myself," she replied.

Rather hesitatingly, he went on: "It's cold for this time of the year, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," she responded kindly.

While Hagar felt inwardly pleased that some one had come along to whom she could talk, the man was actually startled to find such beauty in his discovery. Her pale, soft face, outlined so enticingly through the folds of her filmy white veil, and her chin buried deep in the grey furs, gave her an appearance of piquant charm and grace that held him speechless.

For a moment he stood silently at her side. "You must have just got on the boat," he then managed to say, with a broad smile. "I haven't seen you until to-day." As he settled himself into the chair by her side, he added: "I guess that is my misfortune."

"Probably just the opposite," she laughed back, in a gay, soft musical tone.

Before a half hour had passed, the man at her side was looking into her eyes and telling her, with silent messages from his own, of all the ardour and affection that lay in his being.

It was just as the bugle was sounding for dinner, that

he in a very casual way, asked if her husband would be at the dock to meet her.

"Why, do you think I'm married?" questioned Hagar.

"Oh, you are alone."

"You should be more discerning," said she. "Anyway, if you will look on the register, you will see that I am still a Miss."

"I beg your pardon," he laughed.

Then she said: "Oh, I am just running over to buy some things. I am quite alone."

Her reply very evidently pleased him.

"Where do you intend stopping, if I may ask?" he ventured.

"Why, I really don't know. Where is a good place?"

Hagar had forgotten that discretion was necessary on this broad highway. Perhaps she cared very little about it. And the man, being a denizen of the world, misunderstood her credulity for the subterfugic innocence of the adventuress. Though his tones lost none of their gallantry, his manner changed.

"I'm going to the Meurice," he said blandly. "Go there and register, and I'll look you up for dinner. We'll do Maxim's afterwards." He looked into her face. "How's that?"

"I think that will be very nice," she replied.

"My name is Morgan Best — in case we should miss each other," he added.

Hagar was leaving the tender the next morning, before she asked herself if she should have done differently. However, she felt rather happy about it, and realized that a terrible lonesomeness would have assailed her, had she not some one whom she knew, awaiting her.

The ride through the open country was very tedious and hot, and it was night before she reached Paris.

She could hardly realize that she was actually in Paris.

Her dreams, her most avaricial fancies had taken a definite form, had come true; a new vista was open to her, whose horizon was beyond a distance to which her mind's eye could carry her.

A porter placed her bag beside her in a *fiacre*, and the vehicle started off.

Sitting motionless in the little carriage, her body bent forward, her feet propped up on the cushioned seat opposite, her fingers claspings and unclasping regularly, she became lost in the strangeness of her surroundings. As she passed through the narrow streets, with its rows upon rows of iron-shuttered windows, fear and anticipation became intermingled in her. The voices of the passers-by, the clatter of the horses' hoofs on the wet pavement, seemed to breathe to her an air of romance, or of mystery.

There was invitation in the fog-bedecked entrances of every passing café, she clothed in garments of unreality every petty *garçon*, every newswoman on the street corner. Overawed, exultant, and again queerly saddened, she sat on the worn cushion seat until she reached the front entrance of the Hotel Meurice, which like some gaunt shadowy silhouette, confronted her in the fog.

For a minute there was some excitement; more porters than necessary helped her from the carriage; the sumptuousness of the corridor bewildered her. But it was a relief to find that every one spoke English. After a moment, it took even a stretch of her imagination for her to realize that she was not in the Astor or the Waldorf.

Hagar had already bathed and dressed, and was lying upon the bed, when the telephone gave a short, emphatic ring.

She jumped up and took the trumpet-like instrument from off its hook, a little puzzled to know which end she should put to her ear.

"Yes, hello!" she cried.

"Well, Miss Revelly, you see your boatman is prompt." How thankful she felt to hear the voice of someone she knew.

When they met in the ladies' parlor, the man seemed quite like an old friend.

For supper they tried Marguery's, and afterwards, sought a weird Café Chantant in the Latin Quarter.

But somehow, the evening moved along sluggishly. She felt moody and tired, while a thousand thoughts bothered her. At midnight, when he proposed Maxim's, she asked that he take her back to the hotel. And the man, disappointed, even a bit disgusted to think he had anticipated so full an evening, and gathered so little, was quite willing to follow her bidding.

"I'm sorry we rubbed the wrong way," he said, as he seated himself beside her in the cab.

"I am, too," she replied wearily. "I don't know what's wrong."

"I guess you're tired."

"I suppose that's it."

But when they reached the hotel, with its brilliant lights reflected between the rows of marble columns, she became more animated again. It showed in her eyes, and he noticed it.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said, as if taken by a sudden idea. "I've got a parlor, so it's all right with the hotel, and you just come up. We'll have a glass of wine and a cigarette. I can look over the whole Tuileries Gardens from my room. Will you?"

She thought for a moment. Somehow, she felt no affection for this man. The evening had bored her. So what sense was there in prolonging it? She answered; "No, I think I'll go to bed. See you to-morrow."

"As you say," he replied.

However, when she reached her room and realized the

loneliness, and saw with a startling understanding that she had not an acquaintance or friend in Paris beside this man, she decided upon a change of her plans.

The strange noises that came up from the street, and the queer babble of the maids and bell boys from the hallway, seemed to emphasize her lonesomeness.

She reasoned for only a moment, before she threw an opera cape over her shoulders and went down into the restaurant.

"Bring me a bottle of wine," she told the English-speaking waiter.

"Would Madame desire a dry wine, or perhaps a sweet champagne?"

"Oh, bring me anything you want," she hurled at him — "Pommery — I guess."

The waiter paused to again question her, but she waved him off.

That night the degree of Hagar's understanding took a new plunge. For nearly the first time, she saw the exact meaning that had come with the past month. She was getting older, and what had she accomplished? She couldn't count as very much gained the small amount of money Greenfield had given her. After all, that was only an episode. And at hand was there not just the beginning of one more episode, alike in every detail, to the one with Kettle, or perhaps with Greenfield? There was nothing sure about her future, if she went on like this. And since she didn't dare go back to Greenfield, who else would there be after this man? What else was there to do anyway?

Immersed in her self-interrogation, Hagar was startled to find Morgan Best standing at her elbow.

"You look like you'd lost your best friend," he commented. "Come now, what's wrong? I thought you'd be deep asleep by now." He looked at his watch. "And

here I find you drinking wine — alone. What's the matter?"

"Oh, I'm lonesome," she answered suddenly.

"That's pretty good," he laughed. "You dismissed me half an hour ago."

"I know it. I wanted to go to bed. But I couldn't stand it up there. Oh, I don't know what's wrong."

He drew up a chair to the table, and beckoned to the waiter for a menu.

"You poor child," he said kindly. "If you had been in this town as much as I have, you'd know what's wrong. There are too many people around that seem gay. That's it. That always makes one think they are less happy than anyone else."

He laid the card down upon the table, with some finality. "I'm going to cheer you up. I'm going to make you go over to Maxim's and then to the Bal Taberin — and if that won't do it, we'll take a ride in the Bois by moonlight."

He had such a decisive way with him that Hagar gave in. It was past four o'clock in the morning, when she flung herself into bed, after a round of seemingly every café in town. Best was a very pleasant fellow, after all, and did not in any way show a desire to become more than passingly friendly or intimate.

Hagar saw him every day for nearly a week. It was something new to her understanding, to find a man apparently satisfied to dine with her, and yet not show a desire for greater acquaintance. Only at times did she feel that her innocent manner was making him hesitate.

But one night, after they had been gayer than usual, he grasped her in his arms and told her that he loved her, at the same time proposing that they dine together in his room — to which she consented after a good deal of reluctance.

"And I want you to wear something soft — and blue," he told her. "We'll have the evening all to ourselves."

Full of anticipation, Best arranged an elaborate menu for the next night. He told himself that his patience would be rewarded.

His chagrin was deep, therefore, when on the next day, about an hour before the time of Hagar's coming, the telephone operator announced a visitor.

It was a blow. The man was an old friend from America, whom he had not expected until the following day. It seemed difficult to tell him that he could not see him until to-morrow, and when Miller Jarvis came into the room and grasped his friend's hand, Best was quite determined not to be robbed of his evening's pleasure.

But the man was so sober and serious looking, Best faltered in his purpose for sometime.

He was fairly tall, perhaps five feet ten or eleven, but his height was accentuated by a certain gauntness of body; though he was not bony, there still lurked in his frame some hidden strength, some strange definiteness of purpose that became immediately apparent — a direct contrast to the suave manner of Best. His dark eyes, rather thin lips, and wide, high forehead, gave to his whole appearance a sense of mystery and dignity, that put Best, who had not seen him in some years, ill at ease.

"Well, well, Miller, how are you?" Best cried, studying him. "How are you?"

Jarvis greeted him very friendly, although he seemed uncomfortable as Best's debonair manner became more apparent.

For half an hour they exchanged stored up confidences, and went over with eagerness, on the part of Best, and, evident seriousness on his friend's side, the discussion of past escapades.

While they were talking, Miller told how his sister had met death by some accident; a little huskily, he said:

"It was hard to bear, Morgan. She was the only woman in my life, for whom I ever cared a straw."

"Why haven't you married in the long stretch of time?" asked Best.

Miller replied: "They don't want an old codger like me, my friend." As he spoke, he regarded Best's well-dressed figure. "They want an Apollo like you, Morgan, and some soft-spoken words in their ears — they want to be told of the humming birds that flutter in the gardens of Élysée, and all that. I never was a good hand at that sort of thing. Anyway they don't want a cowboy for a husband."

"You'll get caught, however," commented Best, "because you believe in marriage. I think you'd like to be harnessed."

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. You seem so serious now. I wonder what's happened?" Best wondered too, if now was the time to inform his friend of his inopportune engagement.

The man laughed. "Oh, Montana is trying to send me to Congress. That's enough to make any person serious."

"Then you'll have to get married," said Morgan.

"How about you?" asked Jarvis.

"Oh, I never will. I'm too fond of my freedom. I wouldn't marry the prettiest, cleverest woman in the world — for about five years, anyway. But you are different, Miller," he added. "I think it would do a lot for you — make you President of the United States, or something like that."

They both laughed heartily at Morgan's statement.

"All right, I'll marry then, for political reasons," said Miller, taking a cigar that Best offered him.

And now Best undertook to tell his friend of the small dinner party that had been planned.

He painted in lurid words the expected outcome of the affair.

"She's a strange creature," he went on, "and the remarkable part of it is, that we are going to have this little tête-à-tête when I haven't done more than take a harmless kiss from her forehead. But to-night, my friend . . ."

His ecstasies ceased as a knock on the door announced the coming of a fat-black-haired garçon, with the advance guard of linen and silver.

After he had left, Morgan continued: "But I'm in a quandary about you. It seems a shame for us not to be together your first night in Paris, and I know it would queer things if you stayed very long. It would get late, you know —"

"How foolish you talk," Jarvis interrupted, at the same time taking hold of his hat and gloves. "I'll go to my room. I've got a lot of letters to write. Surely you need not worry about me."

But Best insisted, after a moment's hesitation, that he stay for dinner. He could make his exit after the little feast, and it would be quite the same.

After much argument, Miller agreed to stay. Best seemed rather proud now that he should have the chance of meeting Hagar. "She is a radiant beauty, old man," he said. "I really do want you to see her."

So it was that Hagar found the two men awaiting her in the soft twilight of the little parlor, and as she perceived the second figure, she gave a sudden start, and paused, with downcast eyes. She had dressed as Morgan wished.

A long, clinging robe of smooth, blue material, partly veiled by a silvery beaded shawl about her shoulders, made her seem as nearly ephemeral as the moon's rays that came in through the square, paned doors, leading on to the balcony. At her breast, a small cluster of violets, threw into daring relief the paleness of her face, and the lustre of her black hair.

Best saw her hesitate and quickly rose to greet her.

As he grasped her hands, he said: "You are so good to come."

Then he turned to his friend. "Miss Revelly — Mr. Miller Jarvis, an old friend that I knew in the West, in my camping days."

Hagar bowed and smiled gently. But there was in her a great feeling of anger and rebellion. What was this man doing? Why had Morgan kept him? Was it to show her off?

Dimly conscious, however, that Best was watching her and waiting for an answer, she said, as sweetly as possible, "I'm so glad to meet you, Mr. Jarvis."

The meal was set upon a small table, placed near the large double windows. And after their cigarettes and cordial, Best drew up to the window a large cushioned divan.

"Let us sit here and look out of the window," he said.

Then a very strange thing happened. Hagar's eyes were fastened on Morgan's friend, and try as she could, there was something about the man's strong face that made it impossible for her to change her glances. All through the dinner, she had listened with interest to his soft, low-spoken words, and his stories about hardships and endurance. And now, when he arose to go, she disturbed Morgan Best by her strenuous objections. "I wish you would stay," she begged directly of Jarvis, while

Best, who was arranging the divan with pillows, began to see the possible outcome of his blithe anticipations.

For a moment he realized that there was hardly a way out of it. For each excuse, made by Miller, was met by a strange impetuous demand on Hagar's part that he stay.

"Yes, I want you to stay," she said firmly. "Of course you're not spoiling the evening. Mr. Best wants you, too." She called to Morgan: "Don't you?"

What could he say? Resignedly, lost in a peculiar contemplation of the person whom he had looked upon as a woman of the world, Best submitted.

That night, Hagar lay awake until the vegetable carts, with their loads of Paris rations, rattled through the streets.

She couldn't understand what had come over her. With each spoken word of this tall, thin man, she had felt a yearning for quiet and peace, that puzzled her.

He seemed to fill her with a desire to be good. In her imagination she pictured herself being taken care of by some one like him, and living quietly, and trying to make him happy. A man like Jarvis could give her a home, and take away all the little worries.

Somehow, all in the instant, she decided to win him. A new free life, people who would know nothing about Greenfield or Herrick — what a chance!

As she lay dozing, Hagar offered up a dozen prayers, because Best knew nothing of her former life, and had not entered upon any intimacy with her in their short acquaintance.

The next day she met Morgan Best in the lobby, and he questioned her closely. He was somewhat angry, and in the queer vernacular of the worldly man, told her she had "gone back" on him.

Hagar made no direct reply to his accusation, but after

a moment of hesitant self-questioning, said to him in a low whisper that very much startled him: "I have fallen in love with your friend."

"You have — fallen — in love with him!"

"Yes," she replied bravely.

He looked at her curiously.

"Well, you're a funny child."

"I'm sorry. I can't help it," she answered slowly.

A little quizzically, Best said: "But, I can't understand. You mean you're seriously in love with him? He's old enough to be your father."

"I can't help that. I don't know what it is. I never felt for anyone else the way I do for him."

Best laughed. "Well, I suppose I must tell him, then?"

"If you want to," she answered. "If you don't I suppose I will." Then she went on: "It's no use for me to explain. You wouldn't understand. You look at women as we do — well, our powder-puffs, for instance. Use us, and then when you get what you want, put us back in our little boxes for some other time. He's different. Oh, if you only knew how sick I am of all of it!"

"Supposing, little one," the man said, half tauntingly, "that he doesn't care for you?"

"I'll make him care for me," she replied decisively.

That evening, when he met Miller for dinner, Morgan Best told him all that had happened.

"She's fallen in love with you, old man," he said resignedly.

Miller laughed boyishly.

"But she has, all right."

"Well, I'll have to get her out of the notion, I suppose."

"Why not go ahead?" suddenly thought Best.

"Why? Because she's your lady, I guess."

Only after a time was Miller convinced that Hagar was in earnest with her sudden avowal.

They both laughed about it, but the next morning, when Miller was alone in his room, he thought of Hagar and himself, and of his life so devoid of the diversions of other men.

At night he took Hagar to dinner, and, in his presence, found she was a transformed being. She was demure, eager, naïve, petulant, like a child. Every move of her hand, every gesture, spoke of innocence.

"I wouldn't know you to-night," he said to her kindly. "You're so different. Mr. Best said" — he hesitated, wondering why he could not word his thought differently — "that you would be glad — to go to dinner with me."

"He told you the truth," she stammered, while her dark eyes rested on him.

He searched her face in turn.

"Little girl," he hesitated, "you wouldn't find any fun with a sad lot like me."

Had she not controlled herself, she would have burst out into a wild depiction of her longings, of her desire to lead a new life. But she saw this would necessitate a confession of her past. So she contented herself with the simple statement that she liked very much his grave manner.

They had a quiet, pleasant evening together, and on parting, the same wild beatings in her heart, and the strange thoughts and resolves in her mind, were still with her.

After Hagar left him, Jarvis went upstairs to Best's room.

"Well, did you have a good talk to-night?" asked Best.

"I found her a charming little woman," Miller answered.

"She is an interesting sort, *isn't* she?" Best looked quizzically at Miller, then went on: "In all the time I've known her, she hasn't so much as given me a kiss, voluntarily." He spoke with a knowing air. "But I know she goes in for that sort of thing. You can't tell me she doesn't. She must have suddenly determined to be good, I guess — change her game, or something along that line. Why, I never saw any one act so contrary to first impressions." He reflected a moment, saying half to himself, "And I told her a story about my not thinking of getting married. So, she couldn't have had a plan like that in her mind with me."

"Maybe you don't understand women," Miller answered.

"Maybe. At least, I knew I couldn't let her understand that I was even suspicious. I know this much: a man can't let a woman know that he understands her. If he does, she will never have in him after that a place of refuge for her vanities. That means life to most women."

"You do know women, don't you? With your knowledge you ought to have a lot of them falling to their knees for you."

"You know me better than that. But there is no reason why this girl should not be more true to herself. Why, you ought to have seen how wise she was on the boat. She didn't even know the name of a hotel in Paris."

"Maybe that *was* innocence," Miller protested.

"Oh, I don't know — I don't know. At least, since you have come on the scene, something has determined her to land you. Maybe it is the family in financial difficulties."

"And if there is?"

"Well, that's her game, then. She's determined to land something over here. It wouldn't be the first time such a thing happened in Paris."

Miller smiled. "You don't know her. Your life has been too superficial, Morgan. All of us have the right to our ideals, and their fulfilment. I've had mine," he went on reminiscently.

"Yes, work your head off, get old for an ambition, and when you *will* get it, you will have lost all ability to enjoy it."

"Which may be true. But if I lived your life I'd go crazy, realizing that each day had been only a selfish one for amusement. No, I believe I've solved the problem; the joke of life is too great — too colossal, to look at it in a whimsical fashion."

"You are too serious, Miller," remarked Best.

"We've got to be serious to get on," Miller continued. "I believe the whole secret is in finding serious expression for our inner motives and yearnings."

They were silent for a time, Best remaining in his chair by the little smoking table, while Miller walked over to the window, and glanced down on to the street.

As he leaned slightly over the window ledge, he said: "Morgan, see all those people down there? Well, I'm one of *them*, and if I lived your life, I'd feel somehow that I was cheating."

"Yes, I know how seriously you take the proletariat, Miller. It will make you a Senator some day, if you keep it up."

"No matter where it takes me, I'll get happiness out of it," exclaimed Miller, leaving the window for the moment and coming over to the smoking table.

"Why, you don't know how friendless people really are. They have no one to be sad about, except themselves, and they don't have enough understanding to fake to themselves an appreciation for inadequate objects. Yes, I feel the thing, and if I get a little saddened by doing so, it is only because my own good luck and happiness are

emphasized by their misfortune. It's enough to make any one humble."

"How about the women down there, who are walking the streets? I suppose you have a bond of friendship for them, too?"

"Poor little creatures, most of them are mentally more virtuous than their sisters who promenade the Bois on Sunday mornings."

"I don't understand," exclaimed Best, now really interested for the first time in his friend's half soliloquy. "You think them virtuous?"

"Virtue and purity are names that are not understood. Is not the girl of seventeen who loves, and loving, gives, at the height of her purity? You will say she was — before, perhaps; but I tell you virtue is not like a piece of rubber that you may stretch, and give the different angles different names. Oh, no, the virtuous woman is always virtuous — virtue is not an affair of the body, it's an affair of the mind. It's only the degree of suffering that differs."

"You mean virtue and truth are the same?"

"Yes. Virtue, purity and truth have the same meaning. The woman of the streets is oftentimes of greater purity of mind than the clever woman who hides her throbbing mental subterfuges behind the curtain in her boudoir. And these lies are called virtue by her friends. Yes, Morgan, nowadays it is only hypocrisy that the world calls virtue."

He turned to his friend, who had been listening attentively to his preachment.

"Am I not right?" he asked pointedly.

"Oh, it sounds right the way you say it — except that you are too sad over it, and life is too short for that." He sighed deeply. "I am like Gautier, I guess — not being able to prolong my life forever, I'd rather die of

pleasure than of old age. Didn't he say he was too well acquainted with the emptiness of everything around him to be eager for very long for any one thing? . . . Yes, that's the way I feel about it. Then, what is the use of reasoning, anyway? Reason is only an argument to keep you from doing what you most want to do. I just stay happy — if I can. Some day, I suppose the cloistered part of my soul will go careening to the skies, with the rest of my less worthy self, just the same."

"And so, that's your mission in life, is it?" asked Miller.

"Oh, well, if you want to call it a mission. To me it seems more like a kind of philosophy to pull one through the big game. However, you can certainly preach, Miller." Best walked out onto the little balcony. "I don't know about the Senator so much, now," he called back. "You ought to be a minister."

Miller waited until he came back into the room, then, rather earnestly, looked directly into his friend's face. "You know, Morgan," he began, "if I told you what my mission was, you'd laugh at me. And yet it has as much philosophy in it as your remark."

"Tell me."

"Well, it is a strange idea. But what I should like to do, beyond all else, would be to make people less happy. The majority of people are too gay, too happy over trivialities. I would make them see the tragic environment in which they live, make them think and understand, and realize the situation more fully. In other words, make them less happy, because if one looks at the perspective of life without any studying of its make-up, one is bound to be unhappy.

"If they felt this way, it might make them understand how unstable and upon what flimsy material is life builded — and they might stop to think of someone else beside

themselves, might stop to do some good for someone else.

"Happiness is the most selfish emotion in the world. Every other emotion that you may name takes someone else into consideration; but one can be happy quite alone, even over the misery of someone else."

"You are thinking of me?" interjected Best.

"No, I'm not. Since we started talking on this subject, I'm only voicing my attitude towards this sort of thing. This is what other people call my sadness, I suppose. But I am only trying to prove to you, Morgan, that it is the only real kind of happiness possible."

CHAPTER XXX

HAGAR saw Miller Jarvis every day after their dinner together, and while he found her a delightful companion, without any great amount of intellectual store, he also saw in her a strange gift of intuition, which always put him instantly at ease. She seemed to divine his thoughts nearly, as she would sit and listen to his talk with wide-open eyes. Never in his life had he encountered so sympathetic a companion. He was actually beginning to grow fond of her, and often wished he could return the love which she so openly confessed for him.

However, there was something indescribable that deterred him from having absolute confidence in her. He could not word the thought, and would even feel at the moment, that he was doing her injustice; but a half dozen times or more, when he had been studiously silent, gazing on her features, he would see a sudden change come over her face, a transformation in every line, as if her mask had been thrown off. And in these moments, he would see cruelty and bitterness, instead of the childish trust, which was her usual expression.

He grew to watch for these times, and it was not long before he found that instead of becoming more infatuated with her innocence and goodness, or more engrossed by her affection for him, he was using her as a study, or a model, for the solving of this new human problem.

The days passed on without Hagar making any great headway, and as he seemed to become more disinterested, she decided to take a decisive step.

Instinctively she felt that he was doubting her, and

though he continued so courteous, and showed a willingness to be with her constantly, he never changed his treatment of her to one that was more loverlike.

"Do you trust me?" she asked him one evening.

"My dear child," he answered, "of course I do."

"And you know I am — just the way I am?"

He looked at her steadily. "I don't quite understand."

"Oh, I mean if you believe in me?"

"Surely, I do."

"Then why do you act so kind to me all the time, and gentlemanly? We've been together enough."

"Well," he replied nervously, "you are alone here in Paris. I'd be a poor sort, wouldn't I, not to recognize that?"

She turned the subject off into other channels, but that night she stood for long minutes in her room, saying to herself, "So that's it." He had realized her state of unprotectedness, and would not take advantage of it. For a moment it made her angry with him. Surely he was more foolish than other men.

Then she thought that perhaps he doubted her on the same grounds. Why hadn't she thought of an explanation before? She was, indeed, alone in Paris, without a friend to whom she could introduce him, and her only excuse for that was a quest for some gowns. It was time, she told herself, that she fixed it up.

Up to this period, she had hardly thought of Thatah. But it was only a moment later that she sat down at the desk, and with a controlled desire to shout for happiness, impulsively penned off a letter to her sister.

Dear Thatah:

You are coming to join me. I am here in Paris, Hotel Meurice, as you see above. I will explain when I see you. It

is important that you do this, Thatah. I am in too big a hurry now to explain. Only you must come. Bring your best things — and be prepared to stay two or three weeks. I'll meet you here at the station. You must come, you must — it is the most important thing that has ever happened to me, and you'll be as happy about it as I am. I wait word by cable, telling me the name of the steamer.

Your affectionate sister,

HAGAR.

P.S.— As soon as I get your cable, I'll cable back \$250. Get a dainty tailored suit of some kind. Spend \$75 on it, and take the first steamer you can get.

That night, over a small, ebony-hued coffee in the grill of the Meurice, Hagar quite casually, and apparently most undesignedly, told Miller that she had just received word that her sister, who at the last moment had found it impossible to join her, had written that she would come over in a few weeks.

"You can't imagine how relieved I'll be when she comes," Hagar explained. "When I came over, it was the first time in my life I was ever away alone. Why, I never came up on deck until the last day, I was that frightened. Mr. Best can tell you."

It made her heart cry with joy when she perceived a look of approval spring into the eyes of the man beside her.

CHAPTER XXXI

WEARIED by the continual struggle, Thatah was on the verge of forsaking the unresponsive idealism to which she had so long clung, and of yielding to Graveur's prosaic offer of marriage, when Hagar's letter came.

She had felt herself a creature of ill fate for a long time. Through all her observations and analysis she could see no loophole of escape, no possible opportunity for realization; all was drab, the usual order of the undiversified, monotonous; she experienced no longer the magnified petty emotions. Hagar's letter found her tired, calloused, complaisant, and willing to bend her head in submission.

How it hurt her to realize this no one knew. Even the passing of one day into the next, which had always brought her such poignant unhappiness, troubled her very little now. She did not love Graveur at all, though there was a certain comfort in knowing he cared for her. When she realized that instead of excitement and happiness, she was looking forward now only to being comfortable, she would shut her eyes to it, and reason that she had no right to expect anything more from life. Every woman, she decided, must come to understand that some day.

The letter from Hagar came to the office of the Opera, and as Thatah hastily tore open the envelope, she exclaimed to her employer: "Why, it's a letter from my sister!" Then she saw the Paris postmark.

"I didn't know your sister was in Paris," said Graveur.

"I — didn't either," she answered.

He observed that she seemed completely bewildered by the knowledge.

Thatah read and re-read the impetuous scribbling, repeating it over to herself, and wondering about different bits of the letter. All day she thought about the course she should pursue. At last she sought Graveur for advice.

"What am I to do?" she asked. "She says I must come, that it is most important."

"Do you want to go?" he questioned.

"I don't know," she said, perplexedly, experiencing at the moment a feeling of elation at the very suggestion of a trip to Europe.

Graveur looked at her, and as if he suddenly understood, said: "Perhaps I can do without you for a few weeks, Thatah." Then he sought her eyes, saying: "I will do without you, Thatah, if you wish it."

She muttered: "You are so good to me."

"I am very fond of you," he answered, and immediately outlined a plan to teach the stenographer her different duties.

Thatah thought of the matter the whole night, but the next day found her quite as far away as ever from a decision. However, she did inquire about the sailing of the different steamers. It was now Wednesday, and on Saturday one of the moderate priced steamers of a German line was sailing. Knowing this, brought her nearer to a decision than she supposed, and Friday found her, all breathless with expectancy, with little Edric at her side, and Graveur trudging along with a grip, hurrying up the broad gang-plank of the vessel.

A few hours later, amidst the groaning and creaking of the vessel as it left the dock, she sailed for Europe.

Standing upon the upper deck Thatah caught a last glimpse of Graveur, as he ungraciously squeezed himself

nearer the railing. She waved a kiss to him, then held up little Edric's hand, crying: "See, dearie, wave to Mr. Graveur," and she took the pudgy little fist and shook it up and down in the direction of the fast disappearing figure on the wharf.

Seven days later, after a voyage that brought back to her cheeks some of their lost color, and to her soul a good deal of her former beliefs and hopes, she made out Hagar's figure in the crowd that came up on a tender, as the boat steamed into the harbor at Cherbourg.

Finally, the tender was manoeuvred into position and Thatah went down the stairway into the restless little boat alongside. Hagar had not perceived her until she ran up, quite close to her. She could hardly believe that the phantasy of her thoughts should have really taken life, and brought Thatah to her.

"Oh, Thatah," she cried, "you dear. I'm so glad, so glad!"

"I was afraid you wouldn't get my cable," exclaimed Thatah, at the same time noticing the wonderful gown Hagar wore, and the heightened color upon her lips and cheeks, which went beyond any effect brought on by the salt air.

For a moment, both stood looking at each other, quite unable to speak.

Then Hagar gave Thatah's hand another squeeze. "You are a dear to come. I was so afraid you wouldn't." She went on rampantly: "Oh, Thatah, I've got news, such wonderful news. I'm so happy — and I've been good, too. You wouldn't know me. But you'll understand later on."

They were squeezed by the crowd, and there was much noise about, and Thatah, too completely puzzled to intrude a remark, intended to let her go on talking.

But, at that moment, the stewardess, who had brought

little Edric from the tender, moved a little closer to Thatah, and Hagar, for the first time, noticed the pretty round face of the boy.

Her lips parted, she gripped the arm of Thatah in a vice-like hold, and not a vestige of color remained in her face beyond that of the artificial coating.

"My God!" she whispered, as if not daring to word her suspicion, "Thatah, is — is that — Edric?" As she searched Thatah's face for answer, the mask of white covered her own even more emphatically.

Then the woman at Thatah's side wanted to know if she should still remain, while the baby, with its blonde mass of hair and great blue eyes, showed a desire to get into Thatah's arms.

"Edric? Why, Hagar, of course, that's little Edric," said Thatah, giving the youngster an affectionate glance. "You didn't expect me to leave him alone in New York, did you?"

Hagar gave a wild stare into the crowd, and as she failed to answer, Thatah became alarmed. "Why, Hagar, what's the matter?"

"Oh, my God! I didn't think of *him*."

"I don't understand. Isn't it all right? Why do you take it so hard? You — you need not let him know."

Hagar turned to her. "Who know?" she exclaimed, wondering why Thatah should be aware of Miller Jarvis.

"Why," replied Thatah, "Greenfield, I suppose."

"Greenfield!" The words were started from Hagar's throat in a coarse, heavy laugh. "Why — did you think Greenfield was here with me?"

Thatah, more bewildered than ever, looked at Hagar. "Why, Hagar, of course I did. What else could I think? How else could you get here?"

Hagar's lips were pressed thin for a moment.

"What did you think I wanted you for, Thatah?" she asked on.

"I didn't know. Your letter was imploring, Hagar. I just came any way."

"And you thought that it was something concerning Greenfield and me?"

"Of course I did."

One of the attendants from the boat came up and gave them some directions about landing.

As soon as he left, Hagar began earnestly: "I'll tell you the truth, Thatah. I want to do it before we go any farther. This is the funniest thing I ever heard of. We're older now, both of us, and I've learned a good deal in the last year or so. I've learned the world doesn't care much what happens. In fact, everything just *happens* and you've got to get the most of what falls to your lot. That's one of the reasons I'm here. I used Greenfield a little bit. He paid my way over — and that's all. Everything is a thing of the past between us now."

"You mean that you are alone here?"

"Sure."

"And that you're not going back to him?"

Hagar nodded her head.

"What — about a divorce then?"

"A divorce? A divorce from whom?"

"Why, from Greenfield."

Hagar broke into a laugh, saying loud enough for those close to her to hear: "Why, you silly. I'm not married to Greenfield."

They were nearing the shore now. Passengers were crowding against the railing, hunting for relatives or friends, the white-coated porters were gathering together the luggage in their charge, a bass voiced official was shouting an order, while another tall man in a blue coat

was giving orders to some tourists of the Cook Company. But the sisters did not change their position. Entirely oblivious of their surroundings, they both stared hard into the countenance of the other.

"You lived with him, and never married him?" Thatah said in a whisper.

Hagar shook her head. Very carelessly, she answered: "Yes, that's it. I lived with him for nearly a year, and then I got sick of him, and fixed it so I could come over here."

She took Thatah's hand. "Listen, Thatah," she commenced, "we can't stand here talking like this, even though there is so much to say. I'm pretty much upset. I can't tell you how I feel about — your bringing Edric. I know you didn't do it on purpose, though sometimes I get to thinking all kinds of ways about you. Sometimes I blame you for making me think the way I do. You remember what you said, when I was sick, about it being all right if I loved Herrick? Anyway, that isn't what I want to talk about now. You know we're both victims of a hard-luck family. Things haven't come our way at all. You know that. Of course, we're both very different from each other, and if you think I'm wrong, in looking at things light-heartedly, maybe I think you're wrong to be so serious about everything. Anyway things have taken a turn now. I've met a man, a wonderful man, who is just right for me, and I'm crazy to settle down." Her voice softened somewhat. "He doesn't care so much for me — yet, but I'm going to win him. I guess maybe I'm in love. I don't know. At least, I think about it all the time."

The first shock of their quarrelsome meeting was passed, and now Hagar explained the reason for her letter. When they had landed, and were on their way through the cobbled streets to the one important hotel

of the town, there was something of the old feeling in Thatah that had possessed her when she took Edric away from Hagar's garret chamber.

By the next morning everything was arranged as Hagar desired. They would get comfortably fixed at the Meurice for a few days, and then would seek a smaller and cheaper place; the child was an adopted son of a friend of Thatah's, who had recently died; the truth would be told about their parents.

To every idea Hagar advanced, Thatah readily consented. Somehow, she could bear no ill will toward Hagar, and her sister's helplessness and impulsive nature made her take a certain delight in helping Hagar to avoid possible consequences.

Discovering soon after breakfast that the train for Paris did not leave until nearly noon, Hagar suggested that they take a walk along the beach in front of the hotel.

They were quite good friends again, as they started off on the sandy beach; hand in hand, they followed the line of shore, and only stopped when a great wall of crimson rock loomed up through the misty veil of fog.

The day was warm, and the cooling effect of the cold water of the ocean had thrown into the air a fantastic bank of vapor.

They walked in silence, both thinking how strange it was they should be together, when Hagar exclaimed: "Oh, sister, how beautiful this is." Then they both stopped to admire the view.

Like a huge, low pinnaced cathedral, with its irregular Gothic outline and jagged columns and steeples, the rock stood above the line of fog. The early morning sun could only meekly pierce the cloud of moisture, and the effect was that of mingling rainbows and snow-capped moun-

tains, kissed by the sunlight. It was truly beautiful, and both were held in admiration.

Thatah was affected so deeply she could not speak, but stood very still, in a vagrant contemplation of the beauty of the vision. Never before, to her, had Nature seemed so impelling, so over-awing. It made her think of her life at the office, with its regular duties, day after day.

"Oh, Hagar, this is wonderful!" she exclaimed. "How I should like to live here a whole lifetime." Before she could speak again there were tears flocking to her eyes.

"What in the world—" exclaimed Hagar, noticing, but not understanding Thatah's emotion, and after a moment of utter amazement, adding: "I guess we'd better be going back." She said, as she led the way to the hotel: "If I stayed here a whole day, the place would get on my nerves, too."

"Oh, it didn't get on my nerves, Hagar," said Thatah softly.

"Well, it did something to you. I hate the country and the open air, and all the stuff people rave about so much. It makes me sad, and I hate to be where anybody's sad."

"I love the open country," answered Thatah.

"Is that why you cried?" Hagar asked, with curiosity.

"Well, I guess it is."

"From joy—what?"

"I suppose so."

Hagar studied her for a moment. "My, but you're funny," she observed.

Near noontime the train left for Paris. Thatah did not lose her spirit of exaltation, however. Passing so swiftly through the silent lanes, and vine-covered orchards, was like unfolding into tangibility the propor-

tions of some past dream. The charming little red roofs of the Normandy villages sang an appeal into her heart that made her feel gay and free again, for the first time in many months.

It may have been this song in her soul that made her want to be kind and forgiving to Hagar, for when they entered the Gare St. Lazare, and she had already met the silent, tall man, she felt she would do absolutely the bidding of Hagar.

"Sister, this is Mr. Miller Jarvis," said Hagar.

"I am happy to know you."

Thatah looked up, and there were cold grey eyes, saddened, questioning, peering into her own.

He took her hand. "Miss Revelly," he said simply, while a strange silence hung over the three as they stood there.

Hagar was the first to speak. "We are so happy to have you with us, Thatah."

"I'm happy, too," Thatah replied.

"Aren't you glad, Mr. Jarvis?" questioned Hagar.

"It'll be so nice for us three to be together."

"You know I am very glad," he said quietly.

They went to the hotel, all three sitting huddled closely together, with little Edric asleep on Thatah's lap. They spoke very little, and Hagar was considerably bothered when she perceived Miller's eyes continually glancing at the child on Thatah's lap. She felt relieved when they reached the hotel.

"He feels sorry for Thatah, I guess," she explained to herself. "Thatah always looks so sad."

As soon as they reached the room, Hagar questioned Thatah.

"What do you think of him?"

"I don't know," replied Thatah vaguely.

"He's nice, don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes."

Hagar went on: "You'll get over his grave manner. That's his way. He's always thinking about funny, deep things. But wait until you talk to him. Anyway, I wouldn't want a man that's sporty."

Then she came nearer to Thatah's side, saying: "Just think, Thatah, how great it would be. You know he's running for Senator, or something, out there, and say, won't I have a great time, being the *lady*? I'd make him a good wife, though, and be true to him," she added contemplatively.

Noticing Thatah looked vacantly down into the street, she asked: "What's the matter? Don't you think so?"

"Oh, I hope it all comes out the way you want it," replied Thatah.

Through the hotel management, they procured an English-speaking nurse-girl for Edric, and the next evening Miller took them to dinner, though Thatah begged hard to be left with Edric.

"I must stay," she insisted. "You people don't want me with you, anyway."

"It would be better if you came," said Miller, and in his words there seemed to be an understanding and begging, and command. Something made her nearly rush to the answer: "All right, I'll come then."

The dinner was a failure from the standpoint of buoyancy and spirit. The man was quiet, as if some overwhelming thing encompassed him, while Hagar sat wearily across from him, her elbows buried in the table, her mind puzzled and wandering.

He had not commented upon the dress she had just received from Liberty's. This hurt her deeply; she was also conscious of the fact that once or twice she had smiled to him, thinking his gaze was upon her, only to find his eyes dwelling far away.

After dinner, they moved further in from the street for their coffee, and found a fairly inviting corner right near a very fat Frenchman and his wife. The man wore a flaming red tie and spoke loudly, while his wife answered him in a series of acquiescing grunts.

"Isn't it wonderful in Paris, Thatah?" Hagar exclaimed, after they had gained their seats and the waiter bowed himself back to the kitchen.

"It's truly wonderful, sister."

The glittering life, meeting her gaze in every direction, surely interested her. A tall, beautiful woman seated herself with her escort at the table directly back of them. The woman was dark and sensuous looking, and the man, well groomed and intelligent, sat silently at her side. The music crooned out a slow throbbing melody from some opera.

It was all of a piece, the lights, the coloring, everything — both animate and inanimate — and to Thatah it gave a feeling of restlessness and vague discontent.

She heard Miller's voice in her ear: "This makes one dream, doesn't it, Miss Revelly?"

His voice startled her, but she gained her composure quickly, and answered: "Yes. It's the first time I've dreamed — in a great long while, too."

Then Hagar, who had been watching them, said: "Oh, come, for Heaven's sake, let's not get sad."

Miller, continuing to look at Thatah, asked: "You like — this kind of life?"

Thatah's mind was wandering. She felt more happy and restful now, full of a glorious peace. It seemed that everything at this moment had been made especially for her, as if the pale men and women on the tapestries, with their mandolins and fans, were serenading and watching her.

Then Hagar touched Thatah's elbow: "Thatah, Mr. Jarvis is speaking to you."

Thatah looked up to see Miller's gaze on her. "Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, apologetically, "I have been dreaming, haven't I? What were you saying?"

"I only asked if you like this," he said gently.

"I would like to live in it always," she answered.

"Well, it would take a lot of money," intruded Hagar.

"Money could never make me feel the way I do now," replied Thatah. "Money can't do everything." Then she caught Miller listening intently to every word. "But I guess you're right after all, Hagar," she added. The presence of Miller made her conscious of every word she uttered.

Hagar, however, since she had started them talking, reached out blindly for some way of maintaining the conversation.

"Well, money is a pretty big thing, just the same. It takes a lot of money to live in Paris, doesn't it, Mr. Jarvis?" As Hagar turned to the man who intuitively understood her fluttering effort, she added: "We know, don't we?"

"You bet it does," he smiled, and added thoughtfully: "Still, it's sentiment that makes the world go round. There are a lot of people, especially the artists who come over here, who would rather starve in an interesting fashion, than make money prosaically, especially if starving meant the attaining of something they craved."

"Would you?" asked Thatah, turning to him. Somehow to her the question seemed important.

He thought for a moment, then answered, a bit reminiscently: "Well, I don't know. I think responsibility would be the only thing that would keep me from it."

The conversation dragged after that, and for a long

time following the coffee, absolute silence fell over the entire party.

Miller suggested that they go to some other café for a short time, but Hagar felt so queerly restless and unhappy, she would only agree to them going back to the hotel.

"Let's go back to the hotel — I've got a headache," she pleaded, and she cast her eyes down for a moment, perhaps to appear more wan and weary. But when she looked up, with a subconscious feeling that his sympathy would bring the old caress in its glance, she found him staring at Thatah.

After some discussion, they decided not to ride back to the hotel, but rather to walk slowly along the Boulevard.

The moving throng had the same effect upon them, however. For Miller and Thatah there was no note from the tangible now. Something indefinable seemed to settle about them, and made them understand, as they walked peacefully and silently side by side, that there existed between them a perfect feeling of unity.

The days passed into the first week after Thatah's arrival, when one afternoon, perceiving that Thatah became silent as soon as Miller left them, Hagar said: "Thatah, you're trying to win him from me, and you know it."

Thatah, noticing Hagar's sullen and angered face, exclaimed: "Oh, sister, you shouldn't say that."

Braving herself, Thatah went on. Her voice trembled as she spoke: "Hagar, I came over here blindly — to do what you wanted of me. And I'm here to be as loyal to you as you want me to be. I know you've been watching me."

"But you know he cares for you. Honestly, I didn't know what was wrong until I became suspicious just a

couple of days ago. I'm no fool. I can tell what he thinks and feels, when he looks at you the way he does."

"I'm sorry, Hagar. I've done nothing, absolutely nothing. Why, I've hardly spoken to him."

"Oh, I don't blame you so much, Thatah, but look at the way things stand."

Hagar gave a deep sigh, then exclaimed: "Good heavens, who can tell the crazy turns things will take? As if I ever gave it a thought that he would care for you. But we've got to do something," she went on, earnestly. "I'll be in a rotten fix if things don't take a turn for me. And you're trying to spoil it all, instead of helping me." As she saw Thatah's eyes flash, she went into softer tones: "Sister, you mustn't go back on me. You will help me, won't you? Why, I guess it means my whole life. I'd never work in a store again."

"I understand everything, Hagar. You can trust me. I stood by you once. I'll do it again."

As Thatah went into the next room to hide her feelings, her senses were torn by her dilemma.

Miller soon became conscious that Thatah was avoiding him in every possible way.

At first he was curious and wondered whether it was out of regard for Hagar that she kept away from him, but as she most palpably avoided every meeting, he determined that she really felt no part of this feeling that was overwhelming him.

Then one afternoon, he passed her in the hallway, and their eyes met. He went to his room, and sat for hours with his pulses beating wildly. At last, blind with the sudden determination to know, he rushed to Thatah's apartment. Luckily, Hagar had gone to the dining-room, and he found Thatah on a seat by the open window.

For an instant they stood facing each other.

"You here! You!" she exclaimed. There was trembling and eagerness in her voice.

He stood silent, his face full of begging: "I had to come," he said quietly.

Thatah meant to say several things, to explain the situation, to make him understand the cause for which she was fighting, or even express some word that would turn him off altogether.

But all she could do was to answer his beseeching eyes by extending to him her hand.

"I knew you would understand," he cried.

He led her back to the seat by the window.

"I'm so happy," he said impetuously. "This is so wonderful — so good. Oh, you must know that."

As she drew away from him, he went on hotly: "We're man and woman, Thatah. Do you think that when I've discovered the reality of every thought I've dreamed for years — do you think I'm going to give you up? Oh, you must know. We've got to be brave — but we've got to be true to ourselves. I'll tell little Hagar — I'll tell her everything."

For the first time she looked up into his eyes, crying: "Oh, no, no — I'm doing wrong. Please, please, don't let me!"

Jarvis perceived the truth in her confession. "Thatah, I love you," he pleaded. "What need have people like us for explanation and words? What difference would it make if we had known each other for years? Why, I've loved you," his voice softened somewhat, from the very first moment, there at the station.

"And I've thought and thought about it this last week, until I've been nearly crazed. Oh, child, there is something better and bigger, and greater, that is guiding us. We are not doing wrong."

He saw her saddened eyes filled with tears.

"Look at me," he begged. "Tell me I haven't judged wrongly."

He paused for only a moment now, feeling, as she kept silent, that it was the overflowing emotions that controlled her. Then he went on, talking slowly and earnestly: "I've believed all my life in impulses, Thatah. They are the only true emotions that stored up craving can give, and I'm speaking to you, following the dictates of something that comes from deep in me. And I mean it. Oh, every word of it."

And now she looked up into his face, as he pleaded, and the outlines of it were as familiar to her as if she had beheld them a lifetime. And though she meant not to let him perceive her feelings, she awakened to find his lips upon her forehead, while in her soul there arose a feeling of thankfulness, that paid up in the moment, for all the years of waiting and inertia she had endured.

"Thatah!" came nearly inarticulate from Miller.

She raised her face, and when her eyes were at a level with his own, and she saw there all the strength and love hunger of the man, her resolutions fled entirely, swept away, as if by some overpowering maelstrom of emotion.

"Thatah!" he cried again.

But she said, in a half whisper, "Oh, I can't. . . . Please, man, I must not."

He folded her deep into his arms, saying over and over: "Thatah, I love you."

Then she seemed slowly to yield to his caresses.

"I love you, too. I can't help it," she answered at his lips.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN the fast ebbing light of late day, Thatah and Hagar stood facing each other. The battle cry of defeat and disappointment were silently told in the younger girl's trembling lips and flaring eyes. But she kept her forces together, and nothing beyond a slight unsteadiness of speech revealed to Miller the feeling of rage and despair that flooded through her.

"I've stood out there for half an hour," she cried. "I don't know what it was that made me hurry up so soon. Anyway, I've heard everything." Then she turned in the man's direction. "So you've loved sister all the time, haven't you?" she cried.

Miller, standing erect, his grey eyes softened somewhat, as he perceived the appeal concealed in Hagar's voice, answered: "Yes, Hagar, I love her."

Utterly bewildered by the understanding of the truth of her fears, she searched his face.

Then, instinctively realizing the entire situation, and knowing that she could not make any fight with them together, she hurried towards the door, saying as she went: "I'll leave you two alone."

But Thatah, surmising Hagar's intention, had gone to the door ahead of her. "It is my place to go," she said, as she caught Hagar's arm.

Miller started after her, then he went back to his chair. "She's right, Hagar," he said. "Let us sit down and talk this thing over."

"All right, that's what I want to do," Hagar replied bitterly. And then she began immediately: "You think

I don't understand — that I don't know what it is, to have a real affection for some one, don't you? But I do understand. That's the whole trouble. I let you know from the start how I cared. Yes, it's always that way with men. You've got to lie to them and keep them off. Or else they won't think they're clever when they win you. That was just the trouble. If I had played right with you, and never let you know how I felt, it would have been different."

He started to interrupt her, but she exclaimed impetuously: "Oh, let me go on." And quite recklessly, with a fierce tone of defiance ringing throughout her words, she pointed out to him wherein lay her weakness, and the gradual process by which Thatah had fascinated him. Then, quite suddenly, she burst forth into a strange argument: "Do you know," she glared at him, "why it was that I feared all this? Tell me, have you ever thought?"

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, you ought to," she answered. "You're a sensible man, and if you think a little bit, you'll realize that that story about adopting a friend's child sounds fishy. Of course, I didn't say anything in the beginning, because I thought you cared for me. But, it doesn't make any difference now."

She hesitated, and the man, seeing that her anger was bringing forth some confession, begged her to go on.

"Yes, I'll tell you," she replied. "Oh, I knew you cared for her that first night at Marguery's, but I just couldn't believe it then. Well —"

"Go on, Hagar," said Miller, firmly.

"Well, have you ever thought what might be the real truth about little Edric?"

"Edric! Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, it's all on account of Edric that I've been worried. I didn't think she'd bring him over."

Her voice changed somewhat now, as she said softly: "Edric, you know — is — her illegitimate child."

Miller grasped her roughly by the shoulders. Then he said fiercely: "Do you know what you're telling me?"

"I know — I understand how you must feel. I — you don't know how sorry I am."

Like a flash there came over him at that instant Thatah's expression when she had said: "I love Edric so, I wouldn't give him up even if his mother wanted him now."

Miller exclaimed: "I don't believe it, Hagar."

"I fought hard not to tell you, Miller. Why, good Lord —" she started to say that which lay uppermost in her mind, came near telling him in her suppressed frenzy, how she had wanted to win him, and the plans she had made to accomplish it.

However, she answered quite tranquilly: "I wanted you. That's the reason I didn't tell you then, and why I'm telling you now. I — just wanted to get away — away from this noise and faking. I wanted to go some place where a man would believe in me, some place where — it would be nice and quiet, and peaceful-like, and chickens and cows, and I could hear the birds sing, and breathe the fresh air. Oh, that's what I wanted. God, I wanted it bad, too. I wanted somebody I could be proud of, somebody that would teach me things, I'm — I'm pretty sick of men like Morgan Best."

As if overwhelmed by some outburst from a hidden fountain of truth, Hagar now laid bare her feelings. Imploringly, half crazed by the realization that she was to lose this opportunity for home and peace, she went

on; but in her words, was the abandon of one who knows the futility of their quest.

Very gently she knelt by the side of his chair, and slowly took hold of one of his big hands and stroked the fingers.

"I want you," she said earnestly. "I want you, and I'm not afraid to let you know it. I haven't any pride with you, Miller, or else my only pride is in the feeling that I'm daring to be honest with you. Oh, can't you understand? I've never known anybody like you before. You're so strong and big and serious and kind. Your whole life isn't made up of thinking of clothes and things like that. Why, that used to be the only kind of man I ever thought of, until I met you. You could teach me a lot, Miller."

She reached up and turned his face toward her. The dark lines about his mouth and eyes seemed coarser and deeper than ever.

"Please look at me," she begged.

Some joy came to her at this moment, for she saw that he had been affected by her words. Her happiness was shortlived. He arose from the chair and half dragged her up with him. It was not affection, however, that controlled him, for he seemed more stern and resolute than ever, and a certain fierceness in manner and speech had beset him.

In nearly a whisper he began: "Hagar, this is a rotten world of ours, a great joke . . . but when once I get a thing in my head, it's there for good. And I know now what I think, and I don't believe anything in the world could make the slightest difference. There is something about Thatah's eyes, that tells me I can believe in her. If she has had this child, I'll feel the sorrier for her, and know that she needs my help just that much more."

Hagar understood the futility of further pleading. Miller's words had come so emphatic and earnest, she saw that she would only humiliate herself. She had followed the wrong course with him.

So she turned away from him, and without speaking opened the door and went into the next room. Miller picked up his gloves and hat from a chair, and after hesitating for a moment at the door which had just closed on Hagar, he walked out into the hall.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE next day brought a complement of events.

Miller told Thatah that he had made Hagar acquainted with every detail of his regard for her.

He did not mention Hagar's accusation concerning Edric, feeling that she had been in the next room and might have heard. Even when she told him that she had been in the Tuileries Gardens, he hesitated to tell her, simply through the fear of losing her.

And so, through ignorance on Thatah's part, and Miller's fear, Hagar went about with them, quite as if her story was a forgotten triviality.

On the following evening, the three had dinner together, but Hagar, hardly able to endure her pangs of conscience, complained at its close that she felt ill, and left them.

Miller then suggested to Thatah that they take a walk in the cool, evening air, and she went up to her room for her hat and coat. When she returned, and they walked across the Rue de Rivoli into the Tuileries Gardens, Hagar watched them from the balcony window.

For a time they strolled on in silence, Thatah experiencing for the first time in her life the thought of comfort and thorough peace, such as she had always imagined and longed for.

"I wonder if many people know how wonderful the nights are," said he, as they walked along. "Day-time, I abhor with its shuffling crowds and mocking sunlight and noise. But there's something rather fine in the night-time, isn't there?"

"You mean that you like the quiet?" she asked.

"Oh, I mean more than that. I think at night you are less disturbed by ordinary things. I fancy that is why people are lonelier at night."

"I wonder."

Miller observed her face as she answered him, and when she noticed, she asked what was wrong.

"Nothing, child," he said. She perceived, however, the affection that lay in his eyes and voice.

Off across the Gardens and outlined faintly in the early evening twilight like some gigantic balloon, could be seen the dome of a cathedral. It was in marked contrast to the surging crowds on the well-lighted Boulevard, and unconsciously they wandered in its direction, at last, sitting upon a little bench, near the high iron picketed enclosure that separated the Park from the street.

As they peered through the bars, Thatah remarked how gay everyone seemed in the moving crowd.

"Do you think any one of them ever speculates on the future?" she suggested. "There they promenade, night after night. I should think they would try to find something new."

"I guess their philosophy, Thatah, is to gather the rosebuds while you may," he remarked.

"Yes, and then the rosebuds go, and the rosebushes live, and all you get is the prick of the thorns."

"At least the pricking of the thorns ought to stir them."

When he saw that she did not quite understand him, he said: "I mean people like that, who are surfeited and blasé, can only store up greater monotony in their restlessness. They are not building for the future any more, because they do not know what they want. It's like Morgan Best's case. I can't help thinking that there

is nothing for him to fall back upon, except some extreme of what he has already had.

"Why, sometimes I pity him," Morgan went on earnestly. "He's always selling himself for a price. That's what his pleasures come to. But, we don't buy anything when we sell our hearts, do we?" He paused for a moment, then added: "I guess it's only when we give that the returns are greatest."

He took her hand gently. "I wonder, dear," he said, "if you ever felt that you couldn't take something just because it didn't happen to have a certain attraction that you really craved? I'm like that. It's idealism, I guess. But to me, idealism is only realizing the importance of the things we most want. Yes, I've tried pretty hard to get the same values out of things that come to other people—but, oh, I can't. I want the height always—I want things real, no illusion. I guess I'm foolish."

"Oh, no you're not," Thatah broke in.

"At least, I've been perfectly willing, Thatah, to go along, waiting and waiting, for the day when the great happiness would come to me. When I could recognize it, and then, in my imagination, go out on the prairies or high places, and square my shoulders—and throw back my head, and say to the winds on the hills: 'Here's what I want. It's what I've always wanted—and by God, I'm going to take it.'"

He had lost himself in his words, and as he looked up and realized what he had said, he became more humble again, saying bashfully: "I really forgot what I was doing, Thatah. Forgive me."

"Oh, go on, I love to hear you talk like that," she begged.

He held her hand more tightly.

"Once I came across a phrase that I've always remembered: 'For a dreamer is one who can only find his

way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world.' I used to think that was going to be my fate," he said quietly.

"Oh, I think dreaming is good for one," Thatah added gently — "when the dreams come true."

"People that study life have to dream a lot, I guess. They learn the real values, too. I knew a fellow, once," he went on, "who would make plans on paper for the next day, then he began doing that for his own life, and for those about him whom he knew very well. One day, some one asked him what he was doing. I'll never forget his answer: 'I'm only a photographer of life,' said he, 'trying to take pictures with the end of a pencil.' It was in the Western country, too, Thatah, and out there it isn't all sunlight snapshots."

"I've always wanted to be in the West," said she.

"It won't be long, Thatah," he answered, looking ahead, with eagerness in his eyes.

As they walked back to the hotel, and Thatah hung on his arm, and felt the protection offered her by this man, she wondered what would have happened to her had she not come to Paris.

At her plate the next morning, she found a letter from him, and a great joy flooded her whole being when she realized that Miller might have sat up a good part of the night to write to her.

The letter ran:

Dear Thatah:

I am in a mood. I'm young all over again, and when I find myself affected as I am to-night since leaving you, there is only one thing to do — that is, act just like the youth himself.

I've been sitting here for hours, just thinking about you, in a sort of ecstasy. You mustn't laugh at me. I keep on thinking how happy I am, how I thank God I found you. Why, you seem to have been my companion through all the years,

through all the lonely vigil. I wonder — is there some wild nomadic strain in you, that matches up with that something in me that has always kept me dreaming and yearning.

My watch says it is nearly three o'clock. It's grey white outside now. The milk man has been to the hotel. I can hear his rumbling cans go down the street.

I can hardly wait until I see you in the morning. Ah, I am as frail as the rest of my sex.

I thought I should stop now, only to find myself filled with a desire to talk further with you. I'm afraid this letter will become grotesque — incoherent — surely there is nothing more interesting than the words a man will pour into the ears of the woman he loves. I don't believe women are like this. They convey their feelings by some stray glance, some inadvertent touch, they even say, 'I love you,' but that is all. No, women are really not given to wording their emotions, as are men.

Well, I promise one thing — you will never be for me an asylum for my worries. To those of whom we are fond, we should only dare to give that part of us which will make them happy. If we try to get only sympathy, it means selfishness, and I know love is not that.

I must stop my rambling. We've talked so little.
Good night.

It was her first love letter.

For a long while she meditated, feeling a certain disappointment indefinable to herself. Having been vaguely mindful for some time of his austere, unbending view of life, his lessened understanding of the gayer moments of which even she felt life was full, she only gradually could perceive his sobriety of manner to be the expression mirrored forth from a soul's past torment.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN the days that followed, Hagar went about as though she were in a state of narcosis. When Thatah and Miller decided at the last moment to go back together to New York for their marriage, she stood like some dumb animal, watching the train until it disappeared into the distance.

Her senses distorted by series of unrelenting thoughts, she wondered if Miller had already told Thatah of her lie, and if she had done right in refusing to go along with them, when Thatah had asked her. After all, she reflected, as she walked along, that she would surely have had to settle down with Miller. Thatah was different — she was made for a quiet home. She wondered a little if Thatah really loved Jarvis, with his stiff, foolish ideas about things.

But all the way back to the hotel, Hagar felt as if someone had struck her a blow. Her house of dreams lay shattered about her, and Miller's going with Thatah and little Edric, took away the last invisible prop. When she reached her room, she sat wearily in a rocker by the window. The dark of the room made it easier for her to think and she rocked back and forth with monotonous regularity for nearly two hours.

Alone in the dark she pondered deeply. Until now she had not realized the fact that the to-morrow held out nothing for her. Then she thought of the money she had spent so recklessly, and where more would come from. When she realized quite suddenly the state in which Tha-

tah had left her, she cried: "Am I an outcast?" again and again.

It was a wail of self-revelation. Suddenly her spirit of pride and resourcefulness seemed absolutely taken away.

Until ten o'clock she paced the room, her hands clenched and her eyes searching the bare walls, as if she could bring out of them some hidden thought or plan. She felt rather regretful now that she had not accepted Thatah's invitation to go back to America with her.

About an hour later, Hagar called up Morgan Best.

"I thought you'd forgotten me," he said in his gay manner. "But I was going to look you up, anyway. I promised Miller that this afternoon."

When she was seated in his little parlor, she wondered why Miller's face was continually in front of her. This man had such a clever manner, he seemed so sure of himself, and his hair and clothes were so well taken care of. But somehow she missed Miller more at the moment than ever before. However, she spoke very sweetly to Best. "I got awful lonesome sitting up there after Thatah left. So I just thought I'd call you up."

It was quite dark in the room and Best wondered if he should make a light.

"Oh, I like the twilight," she objected.

"As you wish," he replied.

Hagar walked over and looked out of the window, down into a deep, dark areaway.

"Gee! it's dark down there!" she exclaimed.

"It is dark, isn't it?"

"I'd be so scared, I'd keep this window locked all the time, for fear I'd wake up in my sleep some night." As he failed to answer her, she looked around at him. "Why, what's the matter with you?" she asked. "You're as quiet as a clam."

He suppressed a yawn as he answered: "I'm pretty tired, I guess. Had a big party last night at L'Abbe's."

For some time Hagar gazed over the sill, peering into the darkness, without saying a word. Then she came back into the room, and walked over to him, and leaned somewhat over his shoulder. "I thought we might have some fun to-night," said she slowly, as if he had hurt her by his silence.

Best looked up, with a kind expression upon his face. "I'm pretty tired," said he.

Then he became silent again, while Hagar walked about the room, touching one or another of the different things on the writing desk or on the mantel.

At last she said: "God! say something. You act as if you didn't want me."

"Why, you know better than that, Hagar."

She had taken the chair by his side when the telephone gave a short ring. As he rushed across the room, his spirits appeared to come back in an instant. "I guess that's about my tickets," he said. "I forgot to tell you I'm leaving for Switzerland in the morning."

He put the mouthpiece to his lips, and though Hagar strained hard to hear what he said, his tones were so low and so well directed, she could only get an occasional fragment of a woman's rather high-pitched voice.

When he placed the instrument back on the hook, his face was very red, and she thought he was a little nervous.

"I'm sorry," he explained; "I've got to run downstairs. A friend with whom I had a partial engagement —"

Hagar took the silver beaded shawl from the back of the chair and threw it over her shoulders.

"Oh, don't worry. I'll go," she cried a bit angrily.

"I'm sorry." He spoke rather dejectedly. "Maybe I should have thought about it before, but I —"

"Oh, don't worry. It's all right." In her throat was a choking, uncomfortable feeling.

She had walked as far as the door, when he stopped her and looked steadily into her face.

"Let me tell you a plan I have in mind, Hagar," he said, as he took hold of her arm. "And we best talk straight to each other." For a moment he paused, as if in a search for the right way of beginning. Then he exclaimed: "Well, it's no use to fake with yourself. I understand. I've been watching you ever since you came in here. And it's hurt me a little bit to see how hard you were working. You — are pretty much up against it, aren't you, Hagar?"

She grasped the knob of the door for support, and he, noticing her quivering lips and trembling fingers, made his own interpretation of her silence.

"Now, listen to me," he began.

"Oh, please don't say anything that'll make me feel bad."

He gave a restless laugh. "I won't."

For a moment he stood watching her. "I know — what you told Miller — about the child —"

"Oh, please, please don't talk about that."

"Well, I'm going to ask one question — for his sake. Tell me —"

Hagar grew pale, and she half shut her eyes as if she already knew what he would ask of her.

Best continued in a measured voice: "Isn't Thatah — a good woman?"

She drew herself to her fullest height. In her face was the old proud spirit. But before she could muster her words, she gave way entirely. Her little body wilted, as if it had been struck a blow.

"Oh," she said weakly. "Thatah is — an awful good woman."

"And the child?" he questioned further.

"Oh, please — please," she begged.

Very calmly he looked at her. "I knew it," he said simply; "but I wanted to make sure. I want to tell Miller."

"It didn't make any difference," she started to say.

"Thank heavens," he added to her words. "But I'll write him to-night."

He walked away from her for a time, leaving her alone at the door. Somehow, he was sure she would not leave. When he came back to her side, he said: "Well, we must get down to business anyway. I want to do something for you. Perhaps I should tell you that I believe that I can." He looked into her face. "You know what I'm driving at?"

"Not quite," she faltered.

"Well, it's just this. I've got a friend who's coming over here. He's got — money —"

Hagar grasped his arm. "Please don't say it," she murmured.

"Just as you wish," Best replied. "If you don't want —"

"Oh, go on, don't mind me," turning her head away.

"All right. You know it isn't for me I'm doing this. I'm — well, I'm just sorry for you, little girl, and Paris is a pretty cold proposition." He went on mercilessly now, the while Hagar sat herself dejectedly in a large chair. "This friend, a man named Jack Weller, is a rich jewellery importer in Chicago. I've bought a lot of jewellery from him. He's a good spender, a nice looking fellow, and I believe he'll like you. What do you say? Shall I — fix it up? He'll be here in about ten days . . ."

CHAPTER XXXV

HAGAR commenced her search of the hotel registers, given in an English-printed paper, about two weeks after Best had left Paris. And the few days passing the arrival of Weller's steamer, without his appearance, made her begin to fear that Best's arrangements had gone wrong.

Every day she inquired at the Herald office and looked through the lists for his name.

During this time she bought a long fur coat for winter wear, and two new gowns.

Only once, as she was shopping, did she think it would be a better plan to save her money. But the coming of Weller seemed to make impracticable any plans beyond the point of his arrival. It was really only after the two weeks of waiting that she realized that Weller was not coming. That same day she was confronted by the hotel management for the payment of her bill, and as she stood facing the pale young clerk, she saw that she could not stay at the hotel and await Weller, and that she had not enough money to pay for her leaving.

But she told him, "Oh, I'll fix it up all right, don't worry, I'll fix it up to-morrow."

When night came, she wandered out to the Rue de Rivoli. She was hungry from not eating, completely at a loss for some method of meeting her obligations. She had not the heart to go into the dining-room, after her interview with the clerk, and going into some other restaurant seemed so humiliating that she decided to do without eating altogether.

The street was dark and depressing and she turned off

toward the Rue de la Madeleine. Here it was gayer and better lighted and her spirits lifted accordingly.

In front of Maxim's, a young fellow eyed her and said several words in French to her. When he understood she did not speak his language, he said politely but with an effort: "Why not, Mademoiselle, a little dinner, some place?"

He was quite at her side, and as he whispered into her ear, his body touched her.

"Get away from me," she cried, and tore along the boulevard at a much quicker pace. Before she had walked another block, she was accosted by a half dozen others.

The first incident stayed with her, however, and as she thought about it, the idea that for nothing she might have managed a good dinner, seemed much less repellent than at first thought.

She kept on her way into the Boulevard des Capucines, and when she came to the Olympia cellar, she went down the stairs without being in any way capable of accounting for it. Two women ahead of her had gone down into the burst of light, and she followed them automatically. She did not recognize the long, low running wine room and dance hall as being one to which Miller had taken them one night.

There were many women standing about or sitting at tables here, so her first moment of fright did not turn her away. Instead, she found herself climbing upon a stool after her two companions of the street. A long electrically lighted sign over her head said: "American Bar."

It may have been the instinct that had driven many women before her to the same row of high stools in front of the liquor-shining bar, that impelled Hagar to follow the women. At least, her mind was not prepared, when

the bartender flung at her, in coarse tones, an inquiry of her desires.

In English he spoke: "What'll you have, Mad-m'selle?"

Hagar looked about her, still bewildered by the strangeness of her surroundings. Then she seemed to forget the man altogether, and leaned wearily over the groove that ran along the shining surface to catch the spilt liquor. Her eyes were sunk deep in the frame of dull black hair.

One of the women who had preceded her along the Boulevard, turned to her. She had evidently noticed the expression on the face of the bartender, as he spoke to the forlorn, pale face of Hagar.

"What's the matter with you, little one?" the woman questioned.

Hagar looked up. "Oh, I'm pretty tired," she answered. Then she heard the woman's voice say: "Well, tell the man what you want, dearie. He's waiting. You need a bracer, I guess."

A little more aroused, and realizing the obligation she had assumed by getting on the stool, Hagar asked of the woman: "What are you taking?"

"A little absinthe. I need it about this time of the night."

"Give me the same," said Hagar to the man.

The woman went on regarding her. "Why in the world don't you get some rest? I always make it a point to take it easy during the day. You look all worn out, and the night is just starting."

As Hagar failed to answer, she went on: "Why don't you? You do look like the devil."

"Oh, I don't know."

The woman took her drink at one gulp. "You know, I knew you were an American the way you said, *tired*."

The English don't speak at all the way we do. I'm from New York. Where are you from, dearie?"

"Oh, I'm — from New York, too."

"Are you? Well, it's the only town in the world, all right." She grew quiet for a time and Hagar noticed that she was no longer young, and had a hard-looking face, that for all the paint showed many wrinkles. Then the woman again turned towards her: "God, for just a smell of Forty-second Street, what wouldn't I give! How long have you been here?"

She had been speaking a good deal to herself, until she had asked the question of Hagar, and now as she saw the look of disinterestedness in Hagar's face, she nearly interrupted her own words: "You are certainly tired out, aren't you? I guess it's because you don't know the system. Anyway, one oughtn't work so hard now. The best paying bunch of Americans don't come over until fall. These are all tourists, now. Why, last night —" Then she broke off suddenly, "Where are you living?"

"Why?" asked Hagar.

The woman looked up, hesitated an instant, and then said: "Oh, well, business is business. I was just thinking that you could come with me. You're young and pretty all right, and I think you could do pretty well. You're new at the game, aren't you? Well, anyway," she went on, "you come around with me. We'll talk it over."

She paid for Hagar's drink and started to get down from her stool.

"I — I'll see you to-morrow night. I'm too — tired to-night," faltered Hagar.

Apparently undecided as to her next course, Hagar's companion stood thinking for a minute. Then she took Hagar's hand: "Oh, it'll be a good thing for you. I know what your kind of life is now. There's nothing to

it. The game is too hard when you go it alone. Yes, you're a fool to do the Avenue, even one more night. You're too pretty to be so — so common."

"I'll see you to-morrow night — sure," pleaded Hagar. Her face was bloodless, and her lips were as dry as her tongue. "I'm awful tired."

"Well, all right. I guess it's better for you to get some rest to-night. But go home and rest. If I was you, I'd cut it out entirely for to-night. But you'll meet me here sure to-morrow night, then?" She took out a card from a small leather case. "If I'm not here by ten o'clock, just come around to that address," she said, "and knock once and walk in. It will only let you into the sitting-room. I've got two dandy rooms, and a bath."

"All right. I guess I'll go now," said Hagar, as she took the card and slipped down from the high stool.

"You won't forget?"

"Oh, of course not."

When she was well out of the place, Hagar ran until she had reached her room.

At six o'clock the next morning she sent a cablegram to Greenfield:

"I want to come back to you, Ben. Please, for old times' sake. Will you cable me four hundred dollars?"

CHAPTER XXXVI

BENJAMIN GREENFIELD met Hagar before the boat reached the docks. In some manner, he had obtained the privilege of coming out on the pilot boat, while the big steamship was still considerably out of her New York harbor. Anxiously, fraught with emotion, he followed the pilot up the rope-ladder, and found Hagar awaiting him upon the deck.

The thoughts that had accumulated during the two weeks interval, between the time he had cabled her the money and now, spent itself in the instant. He grasped her in his arms, in front of the curious passengers, and kissed her again and again upon her lips and face.

"Oh, Hagar," he cried, with half-shut eyes.

As quickly as possible she hurried him down to her cabin. He seemed even more frenzied when they were alone, and kept murmuring in a strange way: "Hagar — Hagar — it can't be."

It seemed that only in her name could he find expression for the many weeks of misery he had endured. When he had seated himself upon the little sofa, she asked if he had been lonesome. It was a simple thing to say, as a first answer to his tempestuous greeting, but she could think of nothing else.

In a low voice, he whispered: "Hagar, you'll never know what I've gone through."

"You poor boy," she breathed.

Then he tenderly put both his hands on her shoulders, and turned her face toward him. "But God knows, I'm happy now." The tears glistened in his eyes.

"I don't believe you can understand what I feel, Hagar, you've been cruel as the devil to me."

She smoothed back his hair with her hands.

"I don't believe I can, Ben," she whispered. Then she added: "Oh, I want to, though."

Her voice took on more life. From the first instant of their meeting, she had been trying to word some restless thought, and now she began earnestly, removing his hands, in a graceful confession of her inability to think as she wanted, with him so near.

"Ben," she began, "we'd best talk straight right away. You can't know what I went through the morning I sent you that cable. And after that I just counted the seconds until I heard from you, fearing you would still — be angry with me. You don't know what getting that answer meant to me."

"I can imagine," he said, with his eyes steadily upon her.

Her tones lost none of their firm purpose by the interruption.

"Any way, I've come back, Ben, but I'm going to come back straight, if you want me. And I'm going to be honest about it, too. You know I haven't — been square."

"It's all right, child. Don't talk about it," he pleaded.

"But I must have my say." Her voice faltered a little as she continued: "Oh, Ben, you don't know what I've suffered, just in my thoughts. All of a sudden I changed over there — just felt sick and low and cheap — felt afraid . . . as if I was going to jump off into some hole that I could never get out of. Oh, I can't explain it. And what scared me so much was that I was getting so I didn't care."

"At least, I've changed, Ben. I guess I'm a woman now. I guess I've found myself." She took his hand

and gently caressed it. "And it comes down to this, old boy"—she paused, with her head bowed—"I want a home. I want to be loved—but I want a home more. I want you to marry me. That's—why I came back, Ben. I was just thinking of myself."

He interrupted her. "You're a little excited now, dear," he said, rising from the seat and walking restlessly over to the porthole. "Everything will be O. K., I suppose."

"No, I must talk now. I'm so sick of everything. And we've got to be square. I don't really love you, Ben. I honestly don't. I don't really love anybody. I can't love now. It seems like there ain't any time for that. I just want some place to be in. I want . . . Oh, well . . . maybe after a while, if you'll marry me, and we're all settled, and I can appreciate you more . . . maybe, I'll learn . . . to love you. I hope so. Oh, but the main thing is—I want somebody to love me. See!" she exclaimed, with a sad smile, "I'm talking honest, Ben. You know I'd never said that in the old days. But that's straight, Ben. I do want something like that. You're pretty good—you've been better to me than—well, than you ought to have been, at any rate."

She rose and with him looked out through the little window, over the rough surface of the green water.

"Yes, Ben, I want you to marry me. That's the only way that you can save me. And I'll try hard to be good to you."

Thinking perhaps that he would reply, she remained silent. But he only looked away from her, with his head bowed upon his hand.

She slowly put his arm around her neck.

"Ben," she went on, with a little loss of control in her tones, "I believe I can make you happy. I'm willing to

try — if you're willing to let me. I'm sorry I don't love you, but you understand, Ben, don't you, boy? I'm just trying to be honest."

Then, for the first time, Greenfield answered her. With a cry, he grasped her to him: "Oh, darling, you don't know what I've gone through. You don't know how I've suffered and wanted you. Why, once I thought I'd kill myself. Oh, you don't know. I can't help loving you. But that night —"

"Let's bury that night with the rest, Ben."

"It's been pretty hard to do."

With soft tones, words full of a caress in them, Hagar said: "Well, Ben, perhaps I've got something to blame you for, too. So, it's an evened up game. You didn't know what you were doing that day when you took the little black-haired kid from behind that waist counter, did you?"

It was his turn to beg that she let the past bury itself.

"No," she went on. "I guess men don't think what might happen, when they try to do that sort of thing. They don't think that the little girl might learn — to want — in the same way *he* does. So, Ben, it's evened up. I might have gone further — the night I cabled. And I could have blamed you for it. You were the first human being that put thoughts like that in my head.

"Anyway, it's all right with me — if it's all right with you. I don't love you now — but I'll be square with you, and work for you, and be true to you — if you'll just — marry me."

She framed his face with her hands. "Ben," she faltered, "tell me, is it all right?"

From the upper deck came the blatant notes of a brass band, which had started its jubilant entrance into the inner harbor.

Greenfield took her in his arms, and his face — drawn

and tense — showed his feelings plainly. "Hagar, I love you," he whispered. "It's all right with me. God knows how I want you." Then his voice broke a little. "I know what you're worth — and mean in my life — now."

"Well, if it's all right with you, Ben — it's all right with me."

Silently Greenfield folded her hands and drew them to his lips.

"It's all right, Hagar. You needn't worry. You don't know how wonderful it is, just being here with you. Why, I'm ten years younger this minute. Oh, Hagar — my girlie."

Neither of them spoke for some time — but gazed through the portholes, out over the swiftly passing water, so nearly on a level with their eyes. Bits of sunlight, reflected from the waves, danced fantastically on their faces, while carried through the air came down to them the faint jingling notes of a rag-time melody.

Hagar remained passive in his arms. Then she began to disengage herself from his close embrace. Suddenly she seemed worn and tired.

"It's so stuffy down here, dear," she said. "Let's go up and listen to the band."

Dare we further dog-ear the pages of Hagar's life?

Is it within our province to analyze and dissect the comedy of fate and circumstance — to approach life with lens and forceps, as though it were a magnified Proteus, and, when it suits our fancy, to pinch off an inquisitive pseudopodia from the protozoan bulk, to hold aloft for the appreciation of fellow students?

Who shall take the divine prerogative in dispensing rewards to those spent in travail — to those who must needs traverse the labyrinth of life's doldrums? In the idea of

the parable, the good are rewarded — the bade made to suffer. But is justice so dispensed? Can reward dripping hot from the pen always finish the story? . . .

We live on hopes, expectations — hanging speculatively in mid-air over the abyss . . . tight-rope walkers on the road to destiny. Only with our eyes far ahead are we able to keep to the present task. Dare we, then, revert our gaze to a faltering fellow-traveller?

Experience teaches more than meditation. The abyss gaped deep and shadow-filled. Had not Hagar peered into its depths?

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